

Speech

London schools make a reality of educational excellence

From: [Department for Education](#) and [The Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP](#)
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Nicky Morgan speaks at the Mayor of London's Education Conference about educational excellence and the importance of school leaders.



Thank you, Munira [Mirza, Deputy Mayor of London] for that introduction. And thank you, Boris [Johnson, Mayor of London], for organising and hosting this fantastic conference.

It really is a pleasure to be here at a conference with such a sense of energy and purpose - and such a sense of pride in the work you do and the difference you make.

I want to talk about educational excellence. About how London schools are already giving thousands of children an excellent education.

About what we need to do if we're serious about excellence everywhere. And I want to speak directly to you - the current and future leaders of education in London and beyond - about the opportunity for, and the importance of, leadership.

I want to make a reality of educational excellence everywhere. This is more than an easy phrase. We spent a lot of the last 5 years talking about what we mean by and how we realise educational excellence. For the next 5 years, my focus is on what it takes to make this happen everywhere, across the country from Barking to Blackburn, and from Westminster to Wiltshire.

The reforms of the last Parliament re-introduced rigour to our education system and placed high expectations back at the heart of our all schools.

We removed qualifications from the performance tables that weren't respected by employers and universities and instead began the process of introducing gold-standard qualifications that would equip young people to succeed in the modern world, and on the world stage.

We introduced the EBacc to encourage more schools to offer pupils a rigorous academic core - and I'm struck and impressed that London secondary schools are leading the way.

Because as your pupils grow up, they will need to stand their own with their peers from Shenzhen and Chennai. And from Kraków, and from Frankfurt. And more.

For some people, this is a scary prospect - but it's also an exciting one, and I have confidence and pride in the talent and potential of our young people.

And education is just as much about instilling those virtues and values, and allowing young people to develop their own unique talents, as it is about the grades they receive at the end of school.

A well-educated child or young person should be well rounded, with a range of interests, a real sense of character and grit, equipped for adult life.

Since I took up this role, I've visited almost 80 schools and met over 1,000 teachers - and I know that this is something we all agree on.

Sally [Coates] dedicates a whole chapter of her book ['Headstrong: 11 lessons of school leadership' (2015)] to the importance of developing the whole child. She describes how "our pursuit of academic excellence can never be extricated from the challenge of developing responsible, mature, compassionate citizens who are able to channel their talents towards healthy, productive ends". I entirely agree with her.

So I've taken every opportunity to champion this broader education, through awards and grants for schools and projects that help to develop character; by promoting cadets in schools and the National Citizen Service.

And I'm pleased and proud to make a point of celebrating and backing the work that schools do - such as at Goldbeaters Primary School, School 21 or Mulberry School for Girls and many other schools I've visited. These schools debunk completely the notion that there is somehow any tension between academic success and character education - in fact they demonstrate that the 2 are mutually dependent and inextricably intertwined.

So, after 5 years of reform and challenge, we know what educational excellence looks like and how it can be unlocked. Our challenge is to make a reality of excellent education everywhere. And London schools show what can be done - including in some of the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods and communities in the country.

Schools across London prove that there is no place for the old excuses about 'kids like these'. And you make that point more powerfully than any politician could. We all know about schools

like King Solomon Academy and Mossbourne - they're famous nationally for the quality of the education they offer.

But I'm sure that each of you will know other schools that achieve just as much. You show working hard not only gives children from every background the best possible start in life, but also power to transform whole communities, leading the way in instilling a culture of aspiration, ambition and refusing to settle for second best.

London's academies and chains of schools demonstrate this transformative power of this approach in everything they do.

Groups of schools like the Ark and Harris academies are spreading excellence, and at the same time providing the structures so that teachers and heads can focus on the core of their jobs, allowing us to open new career paths and opportunities for great teachers, and for great school leaders.

Just as there isn't a 'one-size-fits-all' school, so there shouldn't be a 'one-size-fits-all' career path for teachers. And, again, Sally - your career is a great example of some of the opportunities that being a teacher opens.

And, of course, the London Challenge model and legacy lives on. Education in London has been transformed over the last 15 to 20 years. Important networks and ideas are now owned by schools yourselves, like the Challenge Partners.

And the core elements are now the basis for the self-improving school-led system we want to spread across the rest of the country - with the expansion of [Teach First](#), and the networks of teaching schools and of national and local leaders of education.

But a strong school system requires sound funding. We know that there can be no better investment in the future of our country than a good education.

That's why, thanks to the difficult decisions we've taken

elsewhere, the Chancellor was able to confirm in the Spending Review that we would meet our manifesto commitments to protect core spending per pupil and to maintain the pupil premium at current rates - and that the core school budget will be protected in real terms to 2019-2020.

We have been able to go beyond that, and similarly protect the base-rate funding received for every 16-to-19 student, at its current level, to the end of this Parliament.

None of this is to say that schools will not have to find efficiencies. Despite being more generously protected than most of the public sector, you as school leaders will be challenged to make your budgets go further. We will help you to do that - supporting smarter procurement and better sharing of best practice.

The introduction of a national funding formula will also mean change. It is clearly unfair that a school in one part of the country can attract over 50% more funding than an identical school, with pupils who have identical characteristics but in another part of the country. We need to rectify that.

This is about transparency, and about fairness - and so schools in London which have very high levels of deprivation or other additional needs will be funded to meet those needs.

Let me be clear, that while we will consult on the exact formula, we will keep a very close watch to make sure that we are earmarking the right level of funding for deprivation, to ensure that those needs can continue to be met. And, of course, there will also be a geographical element to the formula that will recognise the higher wage costs that London faces.

Before I finish, I want to say a few words to you as school leaders.

You do a phenomenal job. Your work is important and inspiring. Although I'm sure there are days - and weeks - when everything feels like a grind, you lead schools that transform lives. In your

schools, children grow up. You are their teachers and their role models, and you guide and support them through towards adulthood. You have a lot to be proud about.

I am delighted that this month's data shows teacher recruitment starting to rise with over 1,000 more post-graduates starting training this year, compared to last.

There's a lot more to do to make sure we're recruiting, training and retaining the teachers that we need, especially in key subjects and in some areas of the country. But I take these figures as a good sign, and I hope that they reflect a greater recognition that teaching is a fantastic profession and an exciting career to join.

You will know that [I recently announced the National Teaching Service](#) - it's a new programme to recruit and deploy our best teachers and middle leaders into underperforming schools in areas where they are needed most.

The programme will launch next September, with a pilot of 100 teachers and middle leaders in the North West of England. By 2020 it will have deployed 1,500 outstanding teachers and middle leaders to underperforming schools in areas of the country that struggle to attract, recruit and retain high quality teachers.

And I want to encourage each of you to think about the leadership role that you play with pride and with ambition. I know you want the best for your own school and pupils, and that you work hard to make a reality of your goals.

If you haven't already done so, I'd encourage each of you to think about the opportunities to share more widely and take a lead in the school-led system. You could form a partnership with one or more other schools. You might take a leading role within your existing chain. Or you might think about how you could share what works here with schools and emerging chains beyond London.

Deputy heads - your heads won't thank me for this - but you too should be thinking about when and how you want to take the next step.

In addition to those of you here at this fantastic conference, I also want us all to do more to nurture and develop the leaders of the future. I want to encourage talented teachers - and especially those from under-represented groups - to take this step, and to tackle the real or perceived barriers that hold them back.

This is the right thing to do for individuals, and for the profession as a whole. And, more importantly, it's essential if we want to make a reality of educational excellence everywhere.

I know that these aren't easy jobs. I see and hear the challenges you face when I visit schools, talk to school leaders, and when I respond to emails and letters from teachers and heads. We shouldn't pretend that leadership like yours is easy, because it isn't. But it is important, valuable and rewarding.

I will continue to challenge schools to do better. It's what parents rightly expect of me. I will challenge you to give more pupils an excellent start - and especially to do so for those pupils who we currently fail. I simply wouldn't be doing my job if I didn't.

But I can promise you that I will do it with respect, and with a recognition that it isn't an easy thing to ask. And I'll do it because we all share a fundamental belief that every child deserves an excellent education.

As London schools show - great teachers, great heads and great groups of schools can achieve phenomenal things. Thank you, for all that you do.

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The Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP

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