

Speech

Nicky Morgan: a world-class education system for every child

From: [Department for Education](#) and [The Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP](#)
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Education Secretary speaks to education and business leaders about government reforms and giving children a world-class education.



My Lord Mayor Locum Tenens (The Lord Mayor Locum Tenens, Alderman Sir David Wootton), ladies and gentlemen.

It's such a pleasure for me to be back in the City [of London], where I worked from 1994 to 2010, and with Sir David who is a partner at one of my previous firms, Allen and Overy.

We live in an ever-changing world. Globalisation means that we are competing with economies old and new.

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Emerging economies continue to grow and developed economies continue to be adaptive and productive. Despite the fact that Britain was the fastest growing economy in the G7 in 2014 to 2015, it is still sadly true that the productivity gap between the UK and the other G7 countries is currently 17%.

We have to make sure that we are harnessing all our talent because, in 21st-century London, our children compete for jobs with the best and brightest from across the world.

The smartest European graduates work for British banks. Talented coders come from American universities to Aldgate, to work for Über. And if we are going to prepare the next generation to succeed in that global race we need to give them a great education.

But before I go on to talk about the education system we are trying to build, I also want to talk about another major issue that will, I believe, define the opportunities available to the young people of today when they reach adulthood.

And that is Britain's membership of the European Union.

One of the key reasons I will be campaigning for a remain vote, is that I believe the next generation will be stronger, safer and better off in a reformed Europe.

I want our next generation to be able to take advantage of the opportunities access to the single trade free market brings: jobs, investment, lower prices and financial security.

The alternative is to take a leap in the dark - risking our economic security with years of damaging uncertainty when our young people are looking to take their first steps in life, but also, a Britain cut off from the world, where the next generation's prospects are limited and their opportunities end at our shores.

Of course, we could survive outside of the EU, but given the benefits it brings for businesses and employers and the security and safety it offers, why would we risk the years of uncertainty that would follow a vote to leave?


Now, ultimately, the decision won't be taken by me or any other politician, because the Prime Minister has delivered on his commitment to hold an in/out referendum, where the British people will decide whether to remain or to leave.

But there is no doubt that the result will clearly have significant consequences for the City of London and I would urge you to make sure your voice is heard on 23 June.

But even more important than our role in Europe - and I know with the 24-hour rolling media coverage it's hard to imagine there could be anything else going on in our country - is how we prepare the next generation to compete with their peers from across the world.

And I'm afraid to say that our record as a country was, until very recently, simply not good enough.

When we entered government 6 years ago the gap between our highest and lowest performing pupils was substantial compared to other countries; our secondary school leavers performed poorly in internationally benchmarked tests; and performance in England was more strongly associated with pupil background than in many other countries.

What is more, according to the [2013 OECD survey of adult skills](#) , England was the only country in the developed



world where the literacy and numeracy levels of 16- to 24-year-olds were no better than amongst 55- to 65-year-olds.

In all other nations, the basic education of the general population had improved between the generations - but not ours.

To put it bluntly: we just weren't keeping up. And we knew why.

In 2010, we inherited an education system which was more concerned with league tables than times tables; which offered low-quality vocational qualifications that didn't lead to a job simply because they boosted performance on poorly designed measures; where an 'all must have prizes' culture prevented the pursuit of excellence; and where the centralised structure and bureaucratic control of schooling stifled the sort of leadership and classroom innovation necessary to drive improvement.

That's why when we came to office in 2010 we embarked on one of the boldest and most radical reforms of the education system in our history.

Because we owed it to our young people to tackle the soft bigotry of low expectations, and to give them the education they deserve - an education that would help them to realise every ounce of their potential.

For years, the proportion of pupils taking core academic subjects to GCSE had been in decline. To combat this, we introduced the English Baccalaureate measure in 2010, which shows the proportion of pupils in a school being entered for a combination of GCSEs in English, mathematics, science, history or geography, and a foreign language.

The proportion of pupils entering this EBacc combination of subjects nationwide has risen from 23% in 2012 to 39% in 2015 and we are now setting an ambition to get that number to 90% - not because other subjects aren't important, far from it - but because we think that every child who is able should benefit from studying that rigorous academic core that will help them succeed in further study or the world of work.

For me this is a matter of social justice.

I don't want to hear about young people for whom certain careers were taken off the table because they were never offered the subject options they should have been.

Just imagine the talent we could be missing out on if we limit the capacity of our young people to succeed in what they are good at.

At the same time we stripped 3,000 low-value qualifications from the performance tables and replaced them with new courses which have been designed in conjunction with employers - the people who know what young people really need when they leave education.

And London has led the way on rigour from the very start, with its schools adapting their curriculums faster than nearly all other regions.

By 2014 London was the top region in England for take up, with almost 50% of students taking all the EBacc subjects - what a fantastic achievement that is!

Of course we know that exam success and qualifications alone are not enough.

Business leaders - big and small - told us time and time again that they wanted young people to enter the world of work with the character traits that were an essential component to success.

So we have encouraged schools to develop pupils who are confident, motivated and resilient, and who will get on better in both education and employment.

Many schools already work to develop character among their pupils.

Schools like School 21 in Newham which is developing the attributes of grit, spark and eloquence in its pupils through an intense focus on speaking skills and coaching.

And the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson School in Islington which has partnered with the Hogan Lovells law firm and Crossrail to develop a programme of character-building challenges from years 7 to 9.

To support other schools to follow their example we have invested £5 million in character education and supported projects to help build resilience and grit, from competitive sport to work experience and links with local business.

We have developed the [Character Awards to celebrate those schools which excel in moulding confident and self-assured young people](#).

But perhaps the most important ingredient of our school reforms hasn't come from government at all, it's come from the heads and teachers on the frontline - the people who know best how to run their schools.

That's why at the heart of our reforms has been a determination to liberate schools to innovate and deliver what really works.

The hugely successful academies programme has freed schools from the bureaucratic one-size-fits-all approach of the past.

And schools have embraced the freedom and trust that we have given them with extraordinary results.

Were I to ask you where you would find the best non-selective state secondary school in the country today, according to the 5 A* to C GCSE measure, you may assume the answer would lie in a middle class suburb, or a pleasant rural town.

But you would be wrong.

According to this measure, the best school in England is situated in one of the most disadvantaged London wards for child poverty where 41% of the school's pupils are eligible for free school meals - almost 3 times the national average.

Yet at this school, King Solomon Academy, 95% of pupils gained

5 good GCSEs in 2015, and 77% of pupils passed the EBacc, an achievement which would have been branded impossible at the time of their opening in 2009.

The school was founded by a 28-year-old head named Max Haimendorf, and from its inception he has used academy freedoms to break from the standard practices of English state schooling.

The behaviour and ethos of King Solomon Academy is modelled on the 'no excuses' approach of American charter schools, and this is coupled with a deep concern for the well-being of the pupils.

As our free school and academy reforms mature, I am certain that we will see, and in fact we are already seeing, more brave and free-thinking school leaders, like Max, whose pupils achieve previously inconceivable feats under their charge.

In turn, these schools act as beacons to others - providing a model of improvement that they can follow.

I am delighted that we now have 5,500 academies in this country - with 65% of secondary schools and 18% of primary schools having the freedom that academy status brings - able to shape education in their own vision in line with what their parents want and their pupils need.

That's why we have committed to ending the role of the local authority in our schools.

And because we wanted to empower parents even further to demand more for their children - and to give brilliant teachers and local communities to open their own schools, we have introduced the free schools programme - not only to address the shortfall of places we inherited, but also to drive up standards and unlock innovation.

And we know they work.

Despite half of all the 304 open free schools being located in the most deprived communities in our country, 25% of those

inspected are rated outstanding by Ofsted, compared to 19% of all inspected state schools.

That's why the Prime Minister and I have committed to creating 500 more free schools by 2020.

And I am excited to see that the City of London Corporation will be contributing to this number with Galleywall Primary set to open in Southwark in September, closely followed by the City of London Primary in Islington in 2017.

Two more schools to add to their current 4 - all of which are rated 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted.

To date, there are now 1.4 million more children in good or outstanding schools compared with 2010, but we aren't complacent about what is left to do.

With our mandate in government we want to spread educational excellence everywhere.

We believe passionately that if our education system is to succeed as a whole, then the features that currently define the best of our schools must become the norm in the rest of our schools.

London has made truly astounding leaps and bounds in the quality of its education in recent years - but our belief in social justice must drive us to make sure every child gets access to an excellent education, no matter where they are or where they come from.

We have to harness every ounce of talent that our children have if we want to compete on the global stage, whether they come from Hackney or Hartlepool, Battersea or Bradford.

Other countries won't be leaving their talent to flounder, simply because of where a child happens to be born, and neither should we.

We have done more than any government before us to bring the best from the outside world into our education system.

Inspiring charities, great British institutions and successful businesses are all rolling up their sleeves to get involved in this national mission.

You can play an important role in shaping, leading and focusing our schools and colleges, and in helping young people to enter the world of work with the knowledge, skills and character traits that allow them to prosper.

I know that many of you here today are already involved and I can't thank you enough - but we need more of you and your friends and colleagues to come forward.

We already have great headteachers in the system, but what we need is the skill that comes from running a successful organisation: clear mission and purpose, strong governance, innovation, sharp accountability and excellent finance and risk management.

This is what Sir Clive Bourne brought to Hackney when he decided to sponsor one of the first city academies back in 2004.

Clive, an Eastender who left school at 15 and built up a successful overnight parcels business, desperately wanted to bring educational opportunity to the area in which he grew up.

As a magistrate in Newham, he often saw the dire consequences of there being so little.

This combination of moral purpose and business acumen led to the creation of a school which would combat the low expectations, poor behaviour and dumbing down that had so long been synonymous with inner-city schools.

Named after Clive's father Moss, Mossbourne is now one of the best schools in the country, sending a steady stream of pupils every year from east London to Oxbridge and other Russell Group Universities.

Sadly, Clive Bourne died before he was able to see the full flowering of his efforts, but what a wonderful legacy to have left

London.

Speak to others involved in the academies programme, and they will all tell you of the immense fulfilment that comes from taking the skills and knowledge gained in other walks of life, and applying them to improving our schools system.

There are 2 clear ways that I am asking you to come forward and play a role in the renewal of England's education system:

1. As a fully-fledged sponsor directly involved in the running of schools following the example set by organisations like Dixons, BAE and Rolls Royce or Lord Harris of Peckham and Ian Livingstone of Games Workshop.
2. Or, as a non-exec director on the board of a multi-academy trust through our Academy Ambassadors programme.

As an non-exec you will push existing trusts to succeed and give them vital advice and support. We've already placed 150 business leaders on boards in this way but the team are ready to place hundreds more.

Ladies and gentlemen we now have a system with academic rigour at its core; with the freedom for teachers and school leaders to innovate; with new qualifications that are pegged to the highest-performing nations in the world; and with higher levels of numeracy and literacy than ever before.

With exceptional heads and principals, excellent teaching practice and business leaders and British institutions doing their bit - we cannot fail.

When our education system is able to unlock the true potential of every child, Britain will realise its true potential as a nation.

So let's - all of us - commit to making that a reality.

Thank you.

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The Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP

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