

Speech

Stepping up to shape an education system which delivers opportunity for all

From: [Department for Education](#) and [The Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP](#)
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The Education Secretary addresses the NASUWT teachers' union conference to discuss her white paper reforms and working together.



Thank you, Kathy [Wallis, NASUWT National President] for that introduction.

And thank you for inviting me here today. I know there are those who have expressed surprise - astonishment even - that I would 'brave' coming to this conference.

Well, let me be absolutely clear I will engage with any audience, with anyone who wants to participate in the conversation on how we make England's education system the best system it possibly can be. That's why I regularly hold Teacher Direct sessions

across the country so that teachers can ask me questions and I can hear their views.

That's my job as Education Secretary. It's about listening to teachers, parents, anyone who has a role in our education system and - based on those judgements - making decisions about what is best for young people. Unsurprisingly that's what I want to talk about today.

Shared goals

I know there are things on which we disagree. And I will address some of them today but first I'd like to talk about those areas on which I think we do agree and about the significant progress we are making together.

I hope we agree that the education system can and should be a motor to drive social justice, helping to build a fairer society, where people are rewarded on the basis of their talents and the efforts they put in.

I hope we also agree that it can and should extend opportunity and serve to improve the life chances of every single young person in this country - no matter where they are, what their background is, or who their parents are.

I know we agree that we should strengthen the teaching profession by supporting it to become vibrantly diverse.

And we agree that the system should do all that while still valuing the amazing workforce we are so fortunate to have in this country.

None of us can - or should want to - deny that the education system is in much better shape than it was 5 years ago.

The evidence speaks for itself - compared with 2012 we now have 120,000 more 6-year-olds on track to become confident readers; we have 29,000 more 11-year-olds entering secondary school able to read, write and add up properly; and compared

with 2010 we have 1.4 million more children in 'good' or 'outstanding' schools.

And without you and your phenomenal efforts on behalf of the young people you care so passionately about, none of that would have been possible so let me say - thank you.

Focusing on what matters

We all know that the decisions made in government can make it easier or harder for you to do your job. And I'm not afraid to hold my hands up and say that sometimes we get it wrong. One area that governments of all stripes haven't done enough to tackle is teacher workload.

As I said in my very first speech as Education Secretary to my party's conference:

“ I don't want my child to be taught by someone too tired, too stressed and too anxious to do the job well.

“ I don't want any child to have to settle for that.”

That's why I launched the workload challenge, which received over 44,000 responses from the teaching profession on how we could cut down on their workload.

Off the back of that challenge we outlined a set of principles and a new workload protocol to ensure we gave schools and teachers a longer lead time before making significant changes to the curriculum, accountability or assessment and Ofsted committed to doing the same.

Ofsted have also issued a [myth buster on inspections](#) and we cut more than 21,000 pages of guidance to streamline the process.

Today, I am going further and publishing the results of the 3 workload review groups on [marking](#), [planning](#) and [data collection](#)

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These [groups were led by 3 outstanding female head teachers](#)

Lauren Costello, Kathryn Greenhalgh and Dawn Copping. The groups included representation from classroom teachers and union representatives - they are a great example of the profession taking charge of their own development. Thank you to all involved.

All 3 issues: marking, planning and data collection are important - no vital - to pupil outcomes. But too often they have become an end in of themselves detached from pupils. Green ink is added to school books because teachers think that's what Ofsted wants to see, lesson plans are reinvented every year because school leaders think that's what they should ask for and schools find themselves collecting ever more data, and even more frustratingly, sometimes the same data in different formats for different people.

The panels have come up with some clear recommendations for government, which I am now studying and looking at how to take forward. But importantly they also have clear recommendations for the profession as well - because as I'm sure you know, tackling workload requires much more than change from government, but culture change on the ground as well.

This isn't the end of the process. We're continuing to make decisions that will make your lives easier and clear the way for you to focus on teaching.

The proposals for Ofsted reform outlined in the [white paper](#) are designed to make sure you are not beholden to certain styles or methods of teaching. Removing the quality of teaching judgement means there will be less scrutiny on methods, and instead a focus on outcomes and pupil achievement.

Protecting Teachers

At the same time, I want to be absolutely clear, that no teacher should ever have to work in fear of violence or harassment, either in school, outside of school, or online.

Like the rest of the country, I was horrified last year to read of the

case of Vincent Uzomah, the teacher attacked in his own school.

And I was appalled to read in January about the case of teaching assistant Lesley-Ann Noel, knocked unconscious by a parent for doing her job.

And I was disgusted when I read some of NASUWT's research which shows the extent to which teachers are being trolled and abused on social media platforms. What is even more shocking is that this abuse doesn't just come from pupils it can come from their parents as well.

It is unacceptable that this should happen to teachers.

Teachers are the pinnacle of the community, they are charged with the greatest of responsibilities, moulding the next generation, and that means we owe it to you to treat you with the greatest of respect.

Yes, I absolutely want parents to be involved in their children's education and if they're unhappy I want them to be able to demand more of schools. But if their actions spill over into abuse or violence, they should expect to be dealt with severely. Because there is never an excuse to threaten, harass or attack a teacher.

Your research suggests that these incidents are on the rise, and so I have asked my officials to start work on what more can be done to ensure we protect teachers, particularly online, and they will be using your research and engaging closely with the NASUWT and the police on how to do that.

Our reforms

Academisation

Let me turn to the wider reforms in the white paper, because every single one of those reforms are about what we can do to create better environments for teaching and for teachers.

And yes, I'm talking about every school becoming an academy.

I know NASUWT has voiced concerns about the academies programme right from the outset but let's be clear that this is about creating a system that is school-led; one that puts trust in you - the professionals inside the system, giving you the freedom from government to do your jobs as you see fit, based on the evidence of what you know works.

It isn't for me, or officials in Whitehall, or Ofsted to decide how best to teach or run schools - it's for you: the teachers who know better than anyone what works in the classroom and what your pupils need.

Alongside all of the other reforms outlined in the white paper the autonomy that academy status brings is ultimately about giving you the opportunity to step up and make the decisions that will shape the future of schools.

Considering a lot of the press coverage of our Educational Excellence Everywhere white paper you could be forgiven for thinking that full academisation is the only thing it says.

But schools becoming academies is only one chapter of a much bigger story told in the white paper about how we create the infrastructure that allows a self-improving school-led system to flourish: what role government should play in that system, when we should offer you support and when we should get out of the way.

Because as we make clear in the white paper, autonomy is not the same as abdication, for that school-led system to succeed we need to make sure you have access to the best training, the broadest support and a fair share of resources that will allow you to do your jobs to the best of your abilities.

Initial teacher training

So let me start with training.

In the white paper we outline how we want to strengthen initial teacher training (ITT).

What we want to see is more rigorous ITT content with a greater focus on evidence based practice and subject knowledge.

So we have set up an independent working group chaired by Stephen Munday, a school leader with a proven track record, to develop a new ITT core content framework.

To guarantee quality we will create new quality criteria for providers and allocate training places on the basis of those criteria.

And so that the best providers can plan ahead with a greater degree of certainty we will explore ways to allocate training places for several years so we can move away from the short-term allocations system of the past.

Schools know what schools need so we are clear that the ITT system should be increasingly school-led if it is to genuinely prepare trainee teachers for the careers ahead of them and ensure that the education system is able to recruit great teachers in every part of the country. Particularly where they are needed most.

There is evidence, from the recently published 'Good Teacher Guide', that the move to a school-led system has been positive, with high-quality training available and a high conversion rate of trainees.

Qualified teacher status

Beyond ITT the white paper outlines how we intend to replace qualified teacher status (QTS) with a much stronger, more meaningful accreditation.

Our plan is to hand control of that accreditation to great schools and heads - creating a more robust system; that commands the confidence of parents and school teachers.

This reform to teacher accreditation will, I am sure, raise the status of teaching; allowing it to mature as a profession, gain control of its own destiny and take its rightful place alongside other great professions like law and medicine.

Continuing professional development

Like all professionals teachers need continuing professional development (CPD) which allows them to grow in their roles and adapt to meet the new challenges their jobs present them all the time.

We know that schools find it difficult to identify meaningful CPD opportunities which represent good value for money. I'm sure many of you have experiences of unproductive INSET days you could share with me.

So the white paper is clear that we will do more to support the provision of high-quality CPD by creating a new 'Standard for Teachers' Professional Development'.

We don't want to author the standard ourselves. I'm sure the idea of CPD designed by the Department for Education fills you with dread, so we have set up an independent group of experts comprising classroom teachers, school leaders and academics to do it.

The standard they are developing, based on a robust assessment of the evidence, will represent a new benchmark for teachers' professional development.

College of Teaching

And our white paper commits us to supporting the establishment of an independent College of Teaching.

The new College of Teaching will be a professional body like those in other high status professions like law and medicine. It will be a voluntary membership organisation, independent of

government, run by teachers for teachers.

The College will lead the profession in taking responsibility for its own improvement, supporting its members' development and - much like the medical colleges - promoting the use of evidence to improve professional practice.

It will be the embodiment of the school-led system we envisage for England.

National funding formula

Finally, the white paper outlines our plan for a [new national funding formula for schools](#). We want to put an end to the antiquated system of school funding which saw so many young people miss out on resources because of an unfair postcode lottery.

So we are delivering on our commitment to put in a place a fairer formula for schools, and for allocating high needs funding to LAs for both special needs and alternative provision. We believe that this is central to achieving educational excellence everywhere.

Because it must be right that the same child, with the same costs and same characteristics attracts the same funding. That is just basic fairness.

The formula itself will contain a significant weighting of disadvantage funding, but on top of that, we are also committed to the pupil premium so that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds can get the extra resources they need and we want schools to use evidence to advance its effectiveness.

Thanks to the additional funding that the government announced last week our aim is to move 90% of schools due to gain onto this new formula by the end of this Parliament, so that schools aren't kept waiting for the funding they deserve.

Fundamentally our white paper is there to outline our vision about how we improve the education system in this country.

And while I welcome challenge, I welcome debate, feedback and discussion, and I've already received lots of it on the white paper, I want to be clear there will be no pulling back from that vision, there is no reverse gear when it comes to our education reforms. Because we were elected with a mandate to drive up standards, and with your help that's exactly what we want to do.

Representatives of the profession

As I said earlier, we have a shared goal: creating a system that helps all young people to succeed and at the same time values excellent teachers.

Whatever my disagreements on issues of policy with Chris [Keates - NASUWT General Secretary] and Patrick [Roach - NASUWT Deputy General Secretary] I know that when they step up on behalf of their members they are doing it because they believe they can get a better deal for you - their members. That's their job and I respect that.

And I hope that you can respect, that my job as Education Secretary is to make sure we get the best deal for young people.

But despite the job NASUWT and other unions do in representing teachers' interests, I worry that sometimes the rhetoric risks straying into territory where it actually damages the reputation of the profession.

Let me take a case in point.

I visited the NASUWT website recently and found that of the last 20 press releases NASUWT has issued only 3 said anything positive.

Wouldn't it be helpful if more of your press releases were actually positive about the teaching profession?

Because If I were a young person making decisions about my future career, and I saw some of the language coming out of NASUWT as well as some of the other unions, would I want to

become a teacher? If I read about a profession standing on the precipice of crisis would I consider a life in teaching?

No I wouldn't and it's no surprise that TES research this week found that a third of teachers think that talk of a recruitment crisis was more likely to make them leave the profession. And ultimately those who talk of a crisis are being misleading. It doesn't tell the whole story. Like the fact that 70% of vacancies advertised via TES are filled within 4 weeks of advertising.

Yes, recruitment is a challenge and we in government are stepping up, listening to school leaders, putting in place bursaries and schemes to encourage applicants for the subjects they tell us they find it difficult to recruit for.

I know NASUWT want to help - more so than other unions - and they already do good work boosting the teaching profession through the conferences and CPD sessions they run so why then talk it down so much?

Now I need NASUWT to do their bit. In an economy that is growing, with more graduate opportunities than ever before, why aren't the teaching unions to do everything they can to help? Why aren't they using the tools available to them to build up teachers, promote the profession and tell the story of what a rewarding job teaching really is?

That would be stepping up. Choosing to be part of the solution to the challenges we face in recruiting new teachers, rather than adding to the problem.

Just as I accept that this government hasn't always got it right - and I wasn't shy in saying that earlier - I want the teaching unions to accept that they haven't always got it right either.

There isn't another government just around the corner to be frank. I'm yet to hear concrete policy proposals on raising standards from our critics.

So teaching unions have a choice - spend the next 4 years doing battle with us and doing down the profession they represent in the process, or stepping up, seizing the opportunities and

promise offered by the white paper and helping us to shape the future of the education system.

Working with you

The education system I see - in the schools I visit up and down the country, at every opportunity - is not in disarray or crisis. Quite the opposite.

It is a system of increasing confidence, innovation and success. When I see professionals like Colin Hegarty, a teacher nominated for the international Varkey Foundation Award for his ground breaking approach to teaching maths; and Luke Sparkes, Principal at Dixons Trinity Academy in Bradford whose focus is on seeking out what pupils don't know rather than affirming what they do, I know that the teaching profession is fizzing with bright new ideas as well as passionate teachers and leaders who are committed to driving up educational outcomes.

If NASUWT's leadership were being totally open, they wouldn't tell you the system is in crisis either.

So let's resolve to work together so that we can build the education system we agree we all want.

Ultimately it's the young people up and down this country who will suffer if we don't. They only get one shot at their time at school and they are counting on us - all of us - to give them the best possible start in life.

We all know how far we have come since 2010. And we have done it together.

Yes, we will continue to hold school leaders to account on behalf of children and parents. And where capacity is lacking, for whatever reason, we will make sure schools can get the support they need to improve. But we believe that educational excellence everywhere can only be achieved when the power rests in your hands.

You know how best to use it.

So I stand before you today to ask you to step up, decide to be a part of the exciting changes happening in the education system and seize all the opportunities that come with it.

Thank you.

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The Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP

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