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Speech

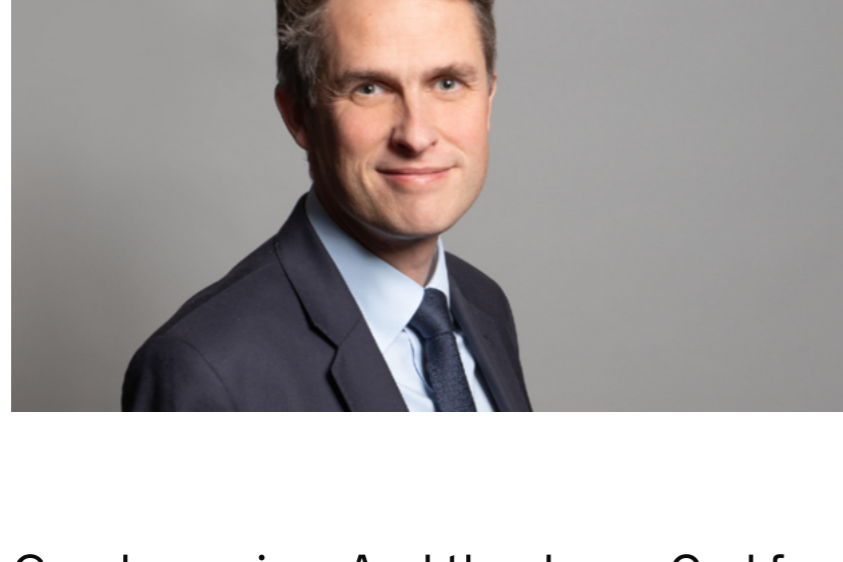
Education Secretary speech to FED National Education Summit

Gavin Williamson addresses the Foundation for Education Development (FED) on education and building forward together

From: [Department for Education](#) and [The Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP](#)

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Good morning. And thank you Carl for those kind words.

It is a real privilege for me today to be joining such a distinguished virtual gathering.

I know that a summit like this will certainly show us the value of sharing our experiences. The Federation has long been a champion of these kinds of conversations but its work has never been more important than it is now.

And to my mind, that is what today's theme of building forward together is all about.

I'd like to begin with how we, as a community, have come together to fight Covid.

Can I take this opportunity, once again to thank you. I am in awe of what you have all achieved through some pretty monumental challenges over the past year. Whether that is delivering remote learning to millions of pupils, implementing widespread testing regimes in schools to break the chain of transmission, or educating children in what have been stranger circumstances than we could ever have imagined, I hope you feel as proud of your achievements as I am.

But we can be in no doubt about the scale of the challenges that still face us. In order to head off a human and economic catastrophe we must double down on our efforts to enable children to catch up.

Partnerships are so important to our work here. This sharing of expertise and experience is a golden thread throughout many of our reforms.

Take the wonderful Oak Academy, which has shown us what can be achieved when creative people put their heads together. We are between us building a legacy for future years, that will only grow and develop over time, bringing benefits to thousands of teachers and students.

One of the most obvious examples of it in action is through our system of hubs. Hubs are the essence of good teamwork.

With hubs you see a ripple effect of expertise, spreading out across the entire landscape. Our hubs cover maths, languages, music and technology, and are expanding to cover both behaviour and teacher development.

And partnerships are also fundamental between schools. We know that schools benefit from being in a strong family of schools, in other words a Multi-Academy Trust.

Multi-Academy Trusts are powerful vehicles for improving schools – by sharing expertise, working collaboratively and driving improvements. It is living proof of the old adage, a problem shared is a problem halved.

This is something we want to see more of, because it shows time and again how the MAT model consistently improves outcomes for pupils.

By 2025 we want to see far more schools residing in strong families than we do today, and are actively looking at how we can make that happen.

Catching up is the educational challenge of the decade. That's why the Prime Minister and I have appointed Sir Kevan Collins as Education Recovery Commissioner, to oversee a comprehensive programme for young people who have lost out on learning due to the pandemic. As chief executive of the Education Endowment Foundation Sir Kevan brought a focus on rigour and evidence to teaching across our school system and I know that he will apply that same laser-focused expertise to his new role.

This is not going to be a quick fix. Even with the best of intentions you cannot make up all this lost ground overnight, especially for those disadvantaged children who were already struggling to keep up. Which is why we are committed to providing a huge programme of catch up measures.

This will include a new one-off £302 million Recovery Premium for state primary and secondary schools, building on the Pupil Premium, to further support pupils who need it most.

We are expanding our successful tutoring programmes and there will also be an extension of the 16-19 Tuition Fund to support more students in English, maths and other vocational and academic subjects as well as funding to support language development in the early years.

Finally we are making £200m available for secondary schools to deliver face-to-face summer schools to target individual pupils' needs.

What we cannot do and what we won't do, is write off any child. Because of the pandemic our ambition for them has to be greater and go further. And this is the morally right thing to do, if we want to level up our country, deliver equality of opportunity and realise the potential of every child.

As schools prepare to reopen fully, one of the most important elements of doing so successfully will be discipline and behaviour. Improving and maintaining good discipline in schools is absolutely vital at any time but even more so now that many children will have fallen behind in their education.

This is not children's fault. We have all been through a tremendous disruptive time and none more so than children. Even with the very best support from parents, children will need to get used once more to sitting in class, working together, the routine of the school day. And of course for many children, who have less support, the challenges will be much greater.

That is why the Government will be backing teachers in ensuring children return to a disciplined, safe and orderly environment. We know much more now about what works best: evidence-backed, traditional teacher-led lessons with children seated facing the expert at the front of the class are powerful tools for enabling a structured learning environment where everyone flourishes.

But whatever method a school uses, consistency is the foundation of everything. All children must know that the standards will be maintained, fairly, and consistently. Teachers are responsible for maintaining good behaviour and discipline; and leaders must be responsible for making sure teachers can, and do.

We need to stop thinking that good behaviour is something that 'just happens'. Some children are lucky to have supportive backgrounds where they learn good habits and social skills. Some are not. That's not their fault. But only the school can do something about it, so schools must – working in conjunction with parents. Behaviour isn't always something that can be changed by just telling children what to do; it must often be taught. Patiently, explicitly, consistently, over time.

Now, more than ever, we need schools to create an environment which makes it easy to behave and hard not to. If they get it wrong, teachers must constantly teach and challenge them to do better. Children learn from each other: the culture must be universal, and everyone should be taught to participate. The school needs to show students if they do their best to behave well, then anything is possible for them, but if they choose not to do so, then they need to be held to account where appropriate for their actions.

As we said in our manifesto, we will be unceasing in our support for teachers to maintain discipline and behaviour in our schools. The teacher is the authority in the classroom, and students must learn that the expectation is they will follow reasonable adult instructions the first time – without dispute. From, that everything else can follow.

Our conviction that behaviour is central to strong school performance is why we are investing £10m to set up a national network of behaviour hubs. These are going to enable schools that already have an excellent behaviour culture to share the lessons they've learnt with other schools. The Hubs will be led by the redoubtable Tom Bennett, and we will be selecting our lead schools in the next few weeks.

Looking beyond schools, I am optimistic that we have the means to kickstart our national renewal. In January we published the White Paper for Skills for Jobs.

This is a step change in how this country gives people the skills they need to get good jobs – jobs that the nation needs and that will put pounds in people's pockets. Our flagship Lifetime Skills Guarantee will unlock the potential of both young people and adults to train, retrain and find work.

Skills for Jobs marks the beginning of our great rebalancing between higher and further education. Although many of our degrees are well-targeted – I was delighted to see the sharp increase this month in young people applying for nursing – university should never be the default option.

For too long we have been funnelling young people to university degrees that do little for their skills or employability, saddling them with nothing but large debts and job prospects no better than they had before. This is not only a waste of potential on a colossal scale but it also harms productivity, which we can ill afford.

Our productivity has been playing catch up with our European neighbours and competitors around the world for decades. We need both colleges and universities to pivot to delivering the higher technical skills that we lack, producing the technicians, healthcare workers, construction workers and digital specialists that underpin the modern economy.

We know that investing in our colleges is the key to rejuvenating our towns and regions, bringing skills, jobs and hope to the left behind communities that lent this Government their vote at the last election. Our reforms put employers firmly at the centre of our local skills systems. And we will back this with funding, beginning with £1.5bn of capital investment and a £2.5 billion National Skills Fund to support adults to reskill.

By getting employers and colleges to work collaboratively, we will ensure that technical education and training gives people real skills for real jobs which is going to boost this country's productivity.

But before I hand over I would like to just to reflect on your achievements over the past year. The challenges you've faced have been enormous, bigger than anything this country has seen since wartime. But, just like then, we will get beyond them by working together, in partnership and we are already halfway there.

Thank you.

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