

# National Council for Educational Excellence: Recommendations

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department for  
children, schools and families

Department for  
**Innovation,  
Universities &  
Skills**



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# Foreword



1. **We want this to be the best place in the world for our children and young people to grow up**, where all children go as far as their talents will take them, and where background is no barrier to a young person's future success. This aspiration requires a world-class education for every child, and is the only way we can compete with rising economic powers and within the increasingly globalised market.
2. We all have a part to play in giving every child and young person the best possible start in life. Government, schools, colleges and children's services have a key responsibility in partnership with children, young people and families, but if we want to achieve our aspiration for a world-class system then we need others too. Employers and Higher Education Institutions in particular have a key role to play in helping to create a culture which values educational achievement and talent, in which all young people have high aspirations and understand their routes and opportunities to achieve them, and in which young people can access skills and expertise to enrich their learning and set it in a real world context.
3. **The National Council for Educational Excellence** was established by Gordon Brown in June 2007 to act as a sounding board about strategy and measures to deliver a world-class education system, and to mobilise key groups within society to support education.
4. The Council brings together influential figures from the worlds of business and Higher Education with outstanding leaders from the early years, school and college sectors and beyond. We have drawn on the breadth of experience and viewpoints around the table to help shape our thinking about what 'world-class' education means, about tackling variations in school performance and about 14-19 reform; and individual Council members have contributed to or led a range of reviews and projects on issues including behaviour, vulnerable young people, young people's mental health, school governance, and the Trust school programme.

5. Council members have worked this year to develop recommendations about where we should focus our efforts – what the business and HE sectors can do, and what schools and colleges can do themselves to improve outcomes for children. Identifying a short list of priorities is a significant and important development – over the next year the Council will work alongside Government to mobilise businesses, universities and the education sector around these priorities.
6. **We owe thanks** to all Council members, and particularly to Julia Cleverdon, Steve Smith, Ed Mayo, Felicity Martin, Ed Gould and Stephen Munday, for their work to consult widely, develop proposals and shepherd them into the recommendations we are now publishing. The Council has met four times this year in schools and colleges, and we have been inspired by the dedication and professionalism of the heads and college leaders we met. We would like to thank the young people and their teachers and headteachers for welcoming us so warmly.

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink. The first signature on the left is 'Ed Balls', written in a cursive style. The second signature on the right is 'John Denham', also in a cursive style.

Rt. Hon Ed Balls

Rt. Hon John Denham

October 2008

# Business

The business leaders on the National Council for Educational Excellence are convinced that business engagement with schools and colleges can deliver real and tangible benefits for all. Together we need to raise dramatically the impact and scale of education-business links in primary and secondary schools, as well as colleges. Where there are quality partnerships, young people find increased motivation and subject relevance, gain insights into the world of work, and increase their work-related and entrepreneurial skills. Those choosing Apprenticeships and the Diploma have a practical preparation for their future career opportunities.

Businesses, both large and small, have plenty to share with those in schools and colleges – through curriculum development and teacher support, encouraging parent or business governors or in valuable partnerships with the senior leadership team. And businesses benefit too – we believe that the business case will hold up in a tougher economic climate because of compelling evidence of increased motivation and greater retention and advocacy rates from employees engaged in these activities.

Those who have championed this activity in schools have encouraged us to set out a National Framework or ‘menu’ which identifies where business can make most difference and this we commend for widespread implementation. Damon Buffini of Permira will shortly report on his review of corporate engagement with young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), and Bob Wigley of Merrill Lynch on his Business Governor review. Sir John Rose of Rolls-Royce has been tireless in his support of the Science, Technology and Maths agenda, and Richard Lambert of the CBI in the need for enterprise and employability programmes.

The challenge now is to increase the quality and breadth of partnerships, scale up best practice, and make the very best use of valuable time and resources. Asking schools to identify a key member of the leadership team for business relationships will help business to connect, as will new web sites. Improving the brokerage between schools and businesses will pay real dividends particularly with schools in areas of greatest need. In my role as Vice President of Business in the Community I am determined with Richard Lambert, and supported by the Chambers of Commerce, to bring business support to achieve the “brilliant brokerage” we desperately need. Sir Terry Leahy of Tesco has spoken of the need to tackle inconsistency and variability in schools across the UK. These recommendations could help to achieve the quality and results we need – but we need schools, colleges, business and government to make this real.

**Dame Julia Cleverdon**

### **Recommendation 1**

Employers should support the delivery of a new National Framework for business education partnership so that by 2010, every primary and secondary school and college should have an effective relationship with business.

The National Framework defines where business can contribute most to raising the aspirations and achievements of young people, and covers:

- School leadership, including governance and teacher professional development
- Basic literacy, numeracy and life skills including knowledge of the world of work
- Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths
- Enterprise education and employability skills

### **Recommendation 2**

Schools and colleges should identify a member of the leadership team to be responsible for creating, managing and developing relationships with business. This should deliver the business contributions to the National Framework clearly linked into the school or college's policy on Economic Well-Being in the curriculum.

### **Recommendation 3**

Business support should be mobilised to deliver all the areas of the National Framework in every school, and in order to put greatest effort into schools that need it most there should be a particular focus on schools in the National Challenge.

### **Recommendation 4**

That good practice in partnerships between education and business should be identified, promoted and celebrated by Ofsted, Government, business and intermediaries.

### **Recommendation 5**

The Government and local authorities should ensure that there is universal access to high quality education business brokerage in every area to support the delivery of the National Framework in every school and college. This should be included in every Local Authority's next Children and Young People's Plan and business should be an equal partner.



**Rolls-Royce promotes science through a range of education links – including the Rolls-Royce Science Prize, and a variety of employee activities with local schools.** The Science Prize awards £120,000 annually to schools and colleges to help them improve science teaching and learning. From September 2008 the competition will build on the company's commitment to Project ENTHUSE, a new £30 million partnership between industry, government and the Wellcome Trust, which provides teachers with funding to cover the cost of attending professional development courses at the National Science Learning Centre.

In addition, Rolls-Royce sponsor 30 schools which have achieved specialist status in science, technology and engineering, benefiting from their education outreach programmes and creating an excellent source of school expertise and feedback.

Around 200 employees are active Science and Engineering Ambassadors working through STEMNET (the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Network), supporting science and engineering-based challenges and activities with schools local to their sites across the UK.

Employees are also supported to act as school governors and there are around 200 employees who are parent, community or Rolls-Royce sponsored governors of local primary and secondary schools.

Alongside national education activities there are many local activities that schools can engage in. Many Rolls-Royce apprentices and graduates lead education and community projects as part of their early career development.

## The National Framework – priorities for business engagement with primary and secondary schools, and with colleges

Theme	Activity
<b>Leadership</b> , including governance and teacher professional development	Parent and business governors on school governing bodies and Trusts (to be informed by the work by Bob Wigley on business governors).
	Continuous professional development opportunities for school staff to develop leadership and management skills and bring relevance to the curriculum, including mentoring, placements.
	Support new routes into the teaching profession through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● the Teach First programme</li> <li>● the Transition to Teaching scheme for STEM specialists</li> </ul>
Basic <b>literacy, numeracy</b> and life skills	Volunteer reading and numeracy in primary schools.
<b>Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths</b> – linked to the STEM Action programmes	Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths clubs with the Science and Engineering Ambassadors scheme
	Projects providing expertise, resources, materials or access to specialist equipment for lessons.

Theme	Activity
<b>Employability skills and Enterprise education</b>	Enterprise activities embedded in subjects across the curriculum and whole school culture
	Awareness of world of work sessions in primary schools, particularly with engaging role models
	Work related learning involving high quality work placements and focused visits to business
	"Real-world" and extended projects as part of design and delivery of the new Diploma
	Apprenticeships
	Pupil mentoring to raise aspirations
	Projects to encourage pupils to continue studying languages in Key Stage 4
	Careers advice including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● "ambassadors" to take part in projects about learning and work</li> <li>● support to teachers seeking to embed information about work into subject teaching</li> <li>● sector-based strategies to inform and attract young people</li> </ul>

# Higher Education

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have long been committed to engaging with schools and colleges. They have established strong and enduring partnerships over many years, playing a central role in the drive to widen participation in higher education. Yet it sadly remains the case that you are much more likely to get a degree if you are from the higher socio-economic groups. The participation gap is narrowing but there is more that we can do and now is the time to be more ambitious.

Our recommendations emerge from an extensive process of consultation and analysis. They are firmly evidence-based and propose ways in which schools, colleges and universities can work together to raise aspiration and academic attainment amongst young people, resulting in increased participation in higher education. We have worked in partnership with a range of key stakeholders, namely the Sutton Trust, which has undertaken a major study of the main barriers to widening participation and increasing social mobility, Universities UK, which has developed a comprehensive review of exemplars of effective links between HEIs and schools; the Association of Colleges; Guild HE; the DCSF Headteachers' groups; and the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust. Our recommendations emerge out of a total of over 400 pages of evidence detailing existing partnerships, what works best and what the underlying problems are that we need to address.

We need to move the debate from a focus on which universities students attend, to one about the vast number of able students who never progress to higher education. The widening participation debate has long been dominated by arguments over fair access, i.e. the percentages of pupils from lower socio-economic groups going on to the most selective universities. The Sutton Trust estimates that this affects roughly 3000 state school pupils each year. Widening participation is the much more extensive issue, dealing with increasing the percentages of children from lower socio-economic groups going on to higher education. This includes about 360,000 16 year olds each year who do not achieve the standards to stay on for A Levels, and around 60,000 of those who were in the top 20% at some time in their school education but do not go on to higher education by age 19. It is time for those who care about widening participation to focus on raising attainment and raising aspirations from a much earlier age so that we can deliver the best education possible for all our young people.

**Professor Steve Smith**

## Recommendation 1

It is important that schools and colleges offer the fullest possible support and advice to students with the ability to enter higher education, including appropriate advice for those with the ability to apply for the most selective institutions. Our recommendation on IAG will go some way to address this issue. In addition we believe the Government should consider asking Ofsted to make the quality of this support an explicit and published part of the inspection process. We also believe Government should consider what information could usefully be made available to schools and colleges to enable them to benchmark their performance with others.

## Recommendation 2

Every primary school should devote time to work on raising student aspirations to take up a place in higher education. Schools and HEIs should try to ensure that every pupil visits a higher education campus either during primary or early secondary education, concentrating initially on schools in low participation or deprived areas.

## Recommendation 3

Government should ensure that primary, secondary schools and colleges are enabled to provide better STEM (particularly maths) skills to pupils to ensure that take-up of STEM courses at a higher level is not constrained by lack of capacity or inappropriate IAG. Schools should continue to develop dedicated activities to promote participation in STEM subjects and modern foreign

languages and HEI links with schools and colleges should support this.

## Recommendation 4

Significant improvements are needed in the information, advice and guidance (IAG) provided in secondary schools:

- Schools should appoint a senior member of staff with responsibility for careers and education guidance, ensure that all staff have dedicated time to undertake HE-related CPD activities, and ensure that up to date HE related information, advice and guidance is provided.
- HEIs should ensure that the provision of timely advice and guidance to young people and teachers is incorporated in all strands of engagement with schools from primary school onwards.
- Schools should encourage ambition in students from lower socio-economic groups to study at the most selective HEIs, and should significantly improve the advice given to students about their 14-19 curriculum choices. The continuity and progression of IAG and support across the school-HEI interface is of critical importance.
- Government should work to promote within schools better IAG for students in order to help them make better choices (particularly of A level and Diploma subjects) and to inform them that if they get good grades then they can and will be considered by selecting HEIs, and for the most selective courses. Web-based mechanisms of offering IAG should be examined as complementary forms of delivery.

- There should be a stronger national publicity campaign, accurately targeted at under-represented groups of students, and funded by Government. The campaign should seek to highlight the financial and other benefits of higher education (including differential returns), the various routes into it, and the financial support packages on offer to support participation.

### Recommendation 5

Building on the speech by the Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills on 8 April 2008, all HEIs should produce for HEFCE comprehensive strategies for their widening participation work. HEIs should support schools, including arrangements for improving school performance in the light of the National Challenge, and be involved with supporting Academies, Trusts or other mechanisms for working with schools. HEIs should consider how best to balance their investments in widening participation and ensuring fair access according to their specific institutional missions. OFFA should acknowledge the full range of contributions made by HEIs in support of widening participation, particularly in relation to IAG, curriculum support/enrichment, student mentors, involvement with Trusts and Academies, and Governor engagement.

### Recommendation 6

HEIs should continue to use, and where possible expand the range of, all the information available to them to identify the best students with the greatest potential and ability to reach the highest academic achievement. In the interests of

openness and fairness, institutions should publish their admissions policies and make them easily accessible to applicants, and equip all those involved in admissions to implement the policy consistently.

### Recommendation 7

Government should look to establish base data on the predictability of the new A level and Diploma A\* grade prior to predicted A\* grades being used in the higher education applications and offers processes. We fully support the introduction of greater stretch and challenge within the A2 syllabus and in order to achieve an A\* award, candidates will need to demonstrate much greater depth, breadth and understanding of the subject in their answers. We are concerned that there is no evidence yet upon which to assess whether the new A\* grade can be predicted with accuracy. Government should collect and review data on predictability over the first few years of A\* being awarded before it enters use in the HE applications process.

**Culloden Primary School, an inner-city school in London's East End serving a primarily Bangladeshi community, has forged links with Cambridge University in order to boost pupil aspirations and increase literacy levels.**

For the past two years the school has taken all of its Year 6 pupils to visit Cambridge and its university and to take part in a varied range of activities. The visit, which is planned to take place on the first day of the new school year in order to set a tone of high expectations and aspirations for the coming three terms, includes punting on the river Cam, a tour of King's College Chapel, lunch in a college and a presentation from a member of the university (staff or student). This year, Dr Andrew Flewitt, Director of Studies for Engineering at Sidney Sussex College, spoke to the pupils about the importance of engineering in the modern world, "UK industry is in real need of young engineers to ensure that the country remains at the cutting edge of new technology. Visits by primary school children, such as this, provide a wonderful opportunity to simply demonstrate that being an engineer is an exciting thing to aspire to, and that going to university can help them to achieve their dreams."

In addition, this year, Joy Warde, the Engineering Department's Outreach Officer, organised a rocket building activity with the pupils, which culminated in the firing of air-powered rockets from the Master's Garden within Sidney Sussex College. A wonderful opportunity was enjoyed by all, with Amanda Phillips, Culloden's Executive Headteacher, affirming that, "Visits such as this play a vital role in broadening our pupils' horizons and giving them rich stimuli for subsequent work in the classroom."

# Partnerships between providers

Our vision is of an education system in which every school, Children's Centre, early years provider, and college is focused on high and improving standards for every individual child and young person in an area, and where purposeful partnerships and collaboration to achieve these aims is a consistent expectation.

Leadership is a priority – we want leaders at all levels to be able to share and learn from each others' experience, and to form partnerships that reflect their particular priorities and needs. We want every provider to see partnership as a natural and normal part of their own improvement plans. We want education providers who are strong and successful to see building leadership capacity and supporting others as a natural next step.

**Felicity Martin, Stephen Munday, Edward Gould**

## Recommendation 1

High performing institutions should expect to play a role in supporting others (particularly the National Challenge schools) and every early years provider, school and/or college should have at least one partnership with the explicit aim of improving quality and raising attainment.

## Recommendation 2

The Specialist Schools network should strengthen its focus on partnerships between schools to raise standards by sharing good practice and subject expertise.

## Recommendation 3

Outstanding leaders should be able to develop their careers by supporting other schools and/or

leading more than one institution; leaders taking on this role should be offered leadership training and development to help them to make this transition.

## Recommendation 4

DCSF should (with Ofsted) improve the inspection and accountability system so that it can better reflect partnership work – both where partnership is essential to offering the full range of provision (eg 14-19) and where high performing institutions are supporting others.

## Recommendation 5

Independent and maintained schools should work together on issues of mutual benefit, and local authorities should actively consider local independent schools when planning local



provision and partnerships. The Government should consider how independent schools could join the Specialist Schools programme, and (with NCSL) should consider offering independent schools more access to leadership training.

**The North Pennine Learning Partnership is building a sustainable partnership between schools.**

The partnership between Bellingham Community Middle School, Allendale Middle School, Haydon Bridge Community High School Sports College, and Samuel King School Technology College covers a very large geographical area with a catchment of 1000 square miles.

There had been collaboration between the schools in the past, but this tended to depend on goodwill and the individual personalities within the schools. Trust status will be used to effectively 'glue' the schools together and ensure the partnership is sustainable, irrespective of changes of governors and headteachers. With falling school numbers in the area, collaboration was seen as an important way of sustaining and enhancing high standards of achievement for the children, while at the same time making crucial savings through achieving economies of scale and making effective use of resources for the schools in the partnership.

The Trust's vision is to create a learning partnership, linked to strong external partners, which will extend learning opportunities for young people in this rural area; a partnership that is sustainable through collaborative and distributed leadership across the schools.

In addition to the four schools, the Trust has identified a number of external partners to help them meet the Trust's vision including; Cumbria and Northumberland County Council; Northumberland College; the universities of Cumbria and Liverpool John Moore's; the Institute for Outdoor Learning; North Country Leisure; the Rugby Football Union and Royal Mail. The partners bring a wide range of benefits, such as developing ICT capacity, enhanced business and financial management of the Trust, support to ensure that students continue to aspire to lifelong learning opportunities as well as providing a vital local perspective on the development of the Trust in areas such as education, work experience and employment.

# Parental engagement

Parents are partners in their child's learning, but they are not always made to feel like that. We need to make the most of what parents can contribute if we are to achieve the vision for education set out in this report. The work of the parents strand has therefore focused on how to raise educational attainment by mobilising mothers, fathers and other carers to support their child's learning. Parental engagement in the education system is important because educational organizations, as public services, should be responsive to, and work with, parents and because parental engagement drives better outcomes for children.

Parents' attitudes, aspirations and values are a crucial influence on children's early development, school performance and wider well-being. However, when it comes to encouraging educational attainment, there are a number of specific behaviours that make the most difference, from encouraging good behaviour, reading with children through to helping with homework. So, while it is good to get parents involved in school life, for example as governors, it is parental engagement with their child's educational development that has the greatest effect on their child's progress. In particular, evidence links positive parental behaviour around children's learning at home to better outcomes for children, including attainment.

The barriers to the positive behaviours can be practical, attitudinal or skills related and these can be different for different parents. But there is a huge amount that can be done to make it easier for parents to contribute and more likely that education organisations will listen – starting, for example, with better information on what their children are learning and easier ways to give feedback, for example around their satisfaction or experience with the child's learning.

Policy approaches should aim to encourage action by parents by tackling such barriers for parents. There is good practice from other fields, such as social marketing for public health, that we can learn from to achieve this. But there is also a need to remove barriers that exist for professionals. There are outstanding examples of education organisations and professionals that are good at parental engagement. We need to embed the skills and competences for this into the heart of professional training and development. This is a process of voluntary culture change which could see an education system based around collaboration, parents shaping services and decisions, and making choices supported by the necessary information.

There are welcome commitments in the Children's Plan and the recommendations of this strand aim to build on these to integrate the engagement of parents into the heart of educational policy and delivery. The Government should:

- actively engage individuals and communities;
- focus on changing behaviours using an applied 'segmentation' approach;
- use longer-term multiple interventions and combined approaches that join up for greatest possible synergies;
- place high quality 'parental engagement' at the heart of the system through effective support for professionals;
- integrate national and local approaches and build on multi-sector working; and
- base services around reflective practice and a learning culture.

Policies that could bring about the changes that are needed should include:

- social marketing and interventions informed by segmenting parents by attitudes and behaviours;
- support for the development of face-to-face networks of parents and online social networks based around schools;
- the better use of customer satisfaction information throughout the system;
- improving continuous professional development for the children's workforce to ensure professionals have the right skills for effective interaction and communication with parents;
- moving from isolated good practice to common excellent practice by recognising and celebrating success for example through awards; and
- the development of tools to give parents confidence, for example playing cards with questions they can use with schools.

The National Council for Educational Excellence will work closely with the Government in the development of policies that take forward these aims.

# List of Council members

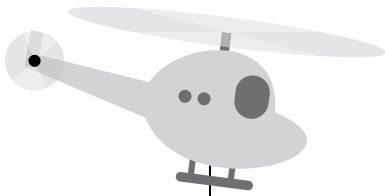
Rt. Hon Gordon Brown	Prime Minister
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Rt. Hon John Denham	Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills
Sir Michael Barber	Senior advisor to the Council
David Bell	Permanent Secretary, Department for Children Schools and Families
Damon Buffini	Chairman, Permira
Dame Julia Cleverdon	Vice President, Business in the Community
Ann Clynych	Principal, Loreto College Manchester
Jo Davidson	Director of Children and Young People's Services, Gloucestershire
Bernadette Duffy	Head, Thomas Coram Centre Camden
Prof. Les Ebdon	Vice Chancellor, University of Bedfordshire
Jackie Fisher	Chief Executive and Principal, Newcastle College
Christine Gilbert	HM Chief Inspector, Ofsted
Edward Gould	Former Chairman, Independent Schools Council
Richard Lambert	Director General, CBI
Sir Peter Lampl	Chair, Sutton Trust
Sir Terry Leahy	Chief Executive, Tesco
Ed Mayo	Chief Executive, Consumer Focus
Felicity Martin	Headteacher, Eggar's School Alton
Stephen Munday	Principal, Comberton Village College
Prof. Sir Howard Newby	Vice Chancellor, University of Liverpool
Prof. Alison Richard	Vice Chancellor, University of Cambridge
Sir John Rose	Chief Executive, Rolls-Royce
Simon Rowe	Headteacher, Waycroft Primary School Bristol
Prof. Steve Smith	Vice Chancellor, Exeter University
Alan Steer	Former Headteacher, Seven King's High School
Bob Wigley	Chairman (Europe, Middle East and Africa), Merrill Lynch

Jim Knight, Bill Rammell and Andrew Adonis also attend meetings.



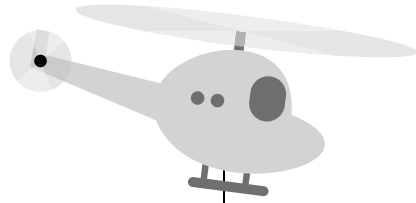






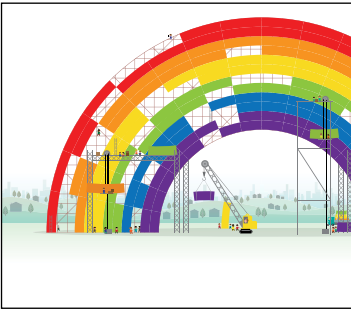
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