

[Press release: £3m Aspiration Fund to help boost sports in the Tokyo Games](#)

Olympic and Paralympic sports outside the World Class Programme will be able to bid for additional investment to help more talented athletes compete at Tokyo 2020, Sports Minister Tracey Crouch announced today.

The £3 million Aspiration Fund will allow sports who do not currently receive full UK Sport funding to develop plans to help teams and athletes qualify.

Sports eligible to apply for the fund include all the unfunded summer Olympic and Paralympic sports, the new sports for the Tokyo Games and those currently in receipt of individual athlete medal support plan funding from UK Sport.

Alongside their qualification plan, sports seeking funding will be asked to submit details of how they will capitalise on the impact of competing at the Games and engage and inspire communities.

The plans will also need to align with the outcomes set out in the Government's Sporting Future strategy to redefine what success looks like in sport: physical well-being, mental well-being, individual development, social and community development and economic development.

Tracey Crouch, Minister for Sport and Civil Society, said:

"The Aspiration Fund will give more sports the chance to inspire the nation and shine at Tokyo 2020 and beyond. This £3 million bridges a gap between grassroots and elite funding, and will help sports grow and develop future champions."

"UK Sport investment has transformed Britain into an Olympic and Paralympic powerhouse. But there are sports, not on UK Sport's world class programme, that do a huge amount of good in communities that we can help on their path to the podium."

Liz Nicholl, CEO of UK Sport said: "This new Aspiration Fund is a fantastic opportunity for some sports to get on track for the Tokyo Games.

"Many of the sports we are currently unable to support, while further away from reaching the podium, have great potential not only to inspire through their performances on the field of play but also to have a genuine social impact in communities across the UK.

"We'd like to thank the Government for their continued support for UK Sport's mission to inspire the nation through Olympic and Paralympic success."

The grants will run to the end of the Tokyo 2020 cycle.

Notes to Editors

Grant recipients are likely to be announced by UK Sport in December 2018. Grants from the Aspiration Fund will be capped at £500k for team sports and £275k for individual sports. Grants from the Aspiration Fund will run to the end of the Tokyo 2020 cycle.

Speech: Ensuring Free and Fair Elections in DRC

Thank you Mr President, and let me begin by thanking SRSZ Zerrougui both for her briefing and for the excellent assistance and advice that you gave the Council during our visit last week. I'd also like to thank Special Envoy Djinnit for his briefing and for the work that he's been doing in the region to support implementation of the 31 December Agreement.

Mr President, there are only 73 days left before elections in the DRC. These elections will be crucial, both to the people of the DRC and for the prospect of peace and stability in the Great Lakes region. If successful, as the Ambassador from France has said, this will prove a historic turning point – the first peaceful, democratic transfer of power in the DRC's history, and it will serve as a foundation on which to build peace, stability and prosperity.

I believe it's important that we as a Council recognise the progress that has been made in the DRC. In particular, the publication of the list of candidates for presidential, provincial and parliamentary elections, and the fact that all parties so far have stuck to the electoral timetable that's been set out.

But if I personally took one thing away from the Council's visit to the DRC, it's that there is still much more work to be done. For elections to be credible, there needs to be an environment conducive to holding free and fair elections. But there remains distrust between opposition figures, civil society and the government, and many Congolese clearly feel that the conditions for credible elections do not currently exist.

There remain a number of unresolved issues:

First, the electronic voting machines. SRSZ Zerrougui mentioned the Westminster Foundation for Democracy's study into these electronic voting machines and the recommendations they have put forward. We would urge CENI to implement those recommendations on how to improve the machines, and we would encourage CENI to undertake outreach with the opposition and with civil society on how the machines will work and how CENI is going about implementing those recommendations. We would also encourage the opposition to engage constructively with CENI when it comes to making the best of the electronic voting machines.

Second, there are questions around voter registration, and we urge CENI to implement the recommendations of the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie.

And third, as the Ambassador of Kuwait has highlighted, the 31 December Agreement contained a number of confidence-building measures, especially with regard to freedom of assembly and expression. We very much welcome President Kabila's commitment to this Council that his government would allow peaceful rallies to take place in the run-up to the election.

And fourth, we believe that independent election observation would help build trust and confidence within the DRC, and we welcome President Kabila's commitment to facilitate observers from the region.

And fifth and finally, nobody I think underestimates the logistical challenges of organising three sets of elections on the same day. MONUSCO has offered its support to the government and we hope very much that the government will take MONUSCO up on this offer.

Madam President, MONUSCO continues to play a vital role in DRC, both in supporting elections and in protecting civilians. The UK is deeply concerned about the deteriorating security situation in North Kivu, South Kivu, Kasai and Tanganyika and the impact this has on the civilian population. This is a very worrying trend and we support the Secretary-General's call for the authorities, with the support of MONUSCO, to take the necessary steps to protect civilians.

We are also concerned about the increase in reported human rights abuses and violations from July to August 2018 compared to the same period last year. As the Ambassador from Sweden said, it is particularly concerning that 59% of the violations across the country were perpetrated by State agents, and we do call on the DRC government to spare no effort in bringing those responsible for such abuses and violations to account.

Finally, we remain very concerned about the Ebola outbreak in eastern DRC. We welcome the leadership of the DRC Government, in cooperation with the WHO and MONUSCO, in responding swiftly to the Ebola outbreak and we remain ready to provide further support.

In conclusion, I'd like to reiterate the importance of the next 73 days. We have come a long way, but there is still much to be done. This Council, together with the region, must remain engaged and supportive to ensure credible, transparent elections lead to a peaceful transfer of power.

Thank you.

News story: Reformed Plug-In Car Grant extended into next decade

The government has today (11 October 2018) announced changes to funding to support purchasing the next 35,000 of the cleanest vehicles.

For the last 7 years, the Plug-in Car Grant (PICG) has provided a discount to the price of over 160,000 new ultra-low emission vehicles.

These changes to financial incentives reflect the ongoing success of the PICG in increasing uptake of electric vehicles, a key part of the government's [Road to Zero strategy](#).

The PICG has helped the plug-in hybrid market become more established, and the government will now focus its support on zero emission models like pure electric and hydrogen fuel cell cars.

The changes to the grant announced today will mean that the grant rate for Category 1 vehicles will move from £4,500 to £3,500 and Category 2 and 3 vehicles will no longer be eligible for the grant.

The PICG was first introduced in 2011, designed to help stimulate the early market for ultra-low emission vehicles.

So far it has supported the purchase of over 160,000 new cars. With plug-in hybrid models like the Mitsubishi Outlander becoming popular among consumers the government is focussing its attention to zero emission models such as the Nissan Leaf and BMW i3.

Plug-in hybrid vehicles are among the cleanest on the road, and can deliver significant CO2 savings compared to petrol/diesel cars. These vehicles will continue to receive support through lower car tax rates, grants for charging infrastructure and local incentives (such as free parking).

Following the success of the PICG scheme the government has rolled out Plug-In Van, and Motorcycle grants, available to both private and business buyers across the UK.

Following the [Last Mile call for evidence](#), and in light of evidence from other countries, a £2 million fund is planned. This will contribute 20% of the purchase price of new e-cargo bikes, up to a threshold of £5,000. Funding will be conditional on individual businesses following a code of cycle safety good practice.

This new fund will help to cut congestion and improve air quality, encouraging companies to replace older, polluting vans with a zero emission alternative to create a cleaner, greener future. Money will be split between larger fleets and smaller operators to ensure benefits are available to and spread between all sizes of business.

Furthermore, the department has separately set aside £100,000 for capacity building in the industry, and will be reviewing opportunities and potential measures to encourage commercial leasing of e-cargo bikes in order to support widespread uptake over the longer term.

We are investing in the design, development and infrastructure needed to speed up the uptake of green vehicles. We are providing £1.5 billion for ultra-low emission vehicles by 2020, and creating a £400 million fund to invest in the roll-out of charging point infrastructure, in partnership with industry.

Since its introduction in 2011 the PICG has:

- supported the purchase of over 160,000 new cars. 100,000 of which are plug-in hybrids
- seen over half a billion pounds of investment in the cars of the future
- ultra-low emission vehicles are already placed into different categories on the basis of their CO₂ emissions and their zero emission range:
 - Category 1 – CO₂ emissions of less than 50g/km and a zero emission range of at least 70 miles
 - Category 2 – CO₂ emissions of less than 50g/km and a zero emission range between 10 and 69 miles
 - Category 3 – CO₂ emissions of 50 to 75g/km and a zero emission range of at least 20 miles
- the changes to the grant announced today will mean:
 - the grant rate for Category 1 vehicles will move from £4,500 to £3,500
 - Category 2 and 3 vehicles will no longer be eligible for the grant
- new grant rates will come into effect on Monday 12 November – if sales are higher than expected, we may reduce grant rates earlier than this date
- a new grant rate for category 1 vehicles will be set at £3,500 to reflect the recent reductions in the price of electric vehicles – Category 1 vehicles have CO₂ emissions of less than 50g/km and can travel at least 112 kilometres (70 miles) without any CO₂ emissions from the tailpipe at all

See [Low-emission vehicles eligible for a plug-in grant](#) for more details of what support is available via the PICG, and how we will implement the changes to the grant.

[Speech: Damian Hinds speech at Confederation of School Trusts](#)

conference

Good morning everyone. I am delighted to be able to join you for this historic conference – the official launch of the Confederation of School Trusts.

Together you have long been a strong and essential voice for the power of setting school leaders free when it comes to raising school standards.

As the Freedom and Autonomy for Schools National Association, for some years now you have worked alongside government to make sure more schools and school leaders have the freedom to make the best decisions on behalf of their pupils and their communities.

Under the leadership of Leora Cruddas, I know the next few years will be just as productive. And I know – new name aside – you will continue to be an important voice for the autonomy and for the benefit of multi-academy trusts.

Today, it is more clear than ever that your voice is needed.

Our country has a long and complex history when it comes to the status and structure of our schools.

If you just look at the last few decades we've had the introduction and then ending of grant maintained status followed by the City Technology Colleges – really the genesis of academies, then the first academies under Tony Blair, followed by their massive expansion under this government.

Slowly and surely, most have come to accept a fundamental point: it is heads and school leaders that should be in the driving seat for deciding what is best for their schools, accountable to their pupils and parents.

[Political content redacted]

Today I want to re-make the case for freedom, for diversity, and for accountability in our school system.

For going forwards, not backwards, as we strive to achieve a world-class education for every child, whatever their background.

It's worth, first of all, underlining just how far we've come on improving our schools these last eight years. Thanks to the hard work and dedication of our teachers and school leaders.

There are 163,000 more six-year-olds now on track to be fluent readers than in 2012.

A reformed curriculum and qualifications.

We have seen the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers narrow across all stages of education.

But the job isn't finished.

I want every child, in every classroom, in all parts of the country to have a world-class education.

No one left behind, whatever their background. That is what I will strive to achieve.

And I've said many times since I took this job that education is a people business. There are no and there can be no great schools without great teachers and great leaders...

As you know, in everything we've been doing to improve education these last few years, we have put a strong focus on handing power back to schools, back to school leaders – recognising that you are the ones best placed to make the right decisions for your pupils, your communities.

It's when you give good people the power to make their own decisions that you unleash their creativity, allow them to drive improvements based on what they know works.

To this end we have opened hundreds of new Free Schools, drawing in talent and expertise from different groups and backgrounds, giving local communities and parents more freedom and choice, so every child can go to a good local school that suits their needs.

Take the Reach Academy, Feltham, a small school set up in an area of high deprivation by a group of teachers who felt that pupils don't always flourish in larger educational settings.

The size of the school allows teachers to work closely with parents and pupils they have high expectations for what every child can achieve. And the results are impressive, Ofsted rated the school 'outstanding' in 2014, and the school was one of the top performing schools nationally for progress in 2017.

We have also helped many more schools become an academy and join a Multi Academy Trust.

The vision behind Multi Academy Trusts is a simple one. It's about schools coming together to achieve more than they can on their own.

Whereas in the past schools could be trapped in poorly-performing Local Authorities that lacked the capacity to help them improve. Now there is real choice for schools – they're not just prisoners of their geography they can join a Multi Academy Trust and get the support they need to improve.

And the support they need to innovate.

Take WISE Academies in the North East, which – since 2012 – has taken on nine sponsored academies all of which previously had significant performance concerns.

This trust has reduced teacher workload through more efficient lesson planning and the creation of shared learning resources they have introduced new ways of teaching such as maths mastery techniques brought over from Singapore.

What is the result? Every school that has been inspected since joining the trust has been judged as 'good' or 'outstanding'.

Going back further, there are schools like King Solomon Academy, which opened as a new academy as part of the Ark network in 2007.

Serving a highly diverse community in one of the most economically disadvantaged wards in London, Ark King Solomon has twice been judged 'outstanding' by Ofsted. While the Academy's Progress 8 scores in 2016 and 2017 were among the best in the country.

Are there examples of trusts where things have gone wrong and children have been let down? Yes.

Should we accept that? No, not for a moment. Rare as these cases are, I'll be talking more about how we prevent them from happening again in a moment.

[Political content redacted]

Each and every year there are new examples of leading Multi Academy Trusts turning around languishing schools and improving results.

And, in addition, we're seeing trailblazing schools and school trusts seizing the chance to innovate. It should not surprise us that the majority of academy schools choose to become so.

But let's step back a moment. What would happen if this was reversed? And we took power away from heads and school leaders?

[Political content redacted]

At the end of key stage 4, pupils in secondary free schools have made more progress on average than pupils in other types of state-funded schools.

Today, in the Academy Programme, more than half a million children now study in a good or outstanding sponsored academy, which typically replaced underperforming schools. Of the schools taken out of local authority control and made into a sponsored academy, by the end of last year, 65 per cent of those which had been inspected saw their grades improve from inadequate to either good or outstanding.

The other great thing about our system today is that it addresses failure. In the past, schools that failed were allowed to stay under local authority control for far too long. The academies changed all that.

[Political content redacted]

Consider Beaver Green Primary School in Ashford, Kent – a school judged

Inadequate by Ofsted in 2013 and with a long history of underperformance. It became an academy in 2015 and last year the school was Ofsted-rated Good in all areas, with the Early Years Provision being rated as outstanding.

Or how about Newfield Secondary School in Sheffield – it was inadequate from 2006 until October 2010.

But when the school became an academy it really started to improve.

And it was inspected in March 2017 for the first time as an academy and was judged Good.

What I hope is clear from me is that my strategy is to trust you to get on with the job.

Let me give you an example. Take mobile phones.

We heard a couple of months ago how France would be banning mobile phones in schools.

Please be in no doubt what I think about mobile phones.

I firmly believe that kids in schools should not be on their phones. I strongly support schools that ban phones.

But when people asked me if I was going to follow the example of France and impose a national ban – I said no.

Because that's autonomy in practice. Heads know best how to run their schools and achieve the objectives they want without any unintended consequences. And meanwhile we have given teachers the powers to confiscate phones if necessary, and also to investigate cyber bullying that goes on beyond the school gates.

There are other areas where I want to proactively stress schools' autonomy.

One thing I've realised doing this job is that too often schools get told that my department or Ofsted expect them to follow the latest fads and fashions in the sector, no matter how time-consuming for teachers and how little evidence there is that they actually benefit the child...

I'm talking about things like excessive progress monitoring, annotated seating plans, triple marking, deep marking, DIRT marking, colour coded marking, you-name-it marking. All things that have added, quite unnecessarily, to teacher workload over the years.

That's why I asked Professor Becky Allen to chair a workload advisory group, to understand why schools are drowning in data and make recommendations to change this. Their report will be published soon, and will set out actions to give schools greater flexibility in the choices they make about how data is used.

And that's why Amanda Spielman, myself and others recently made a video

stressing that schools are free to follow their own judgement when it comes to lesson plans, the data they collect, the marking policies. I say it again: you don't need to do any of this for me, for DfE, for Ofsted.

So what next for our school system?

Earlier in the year I launched our latest round of applications to become a free school – specifically targeting areas where there is a real demand for good schools.

And yet again we've had a great deal of interest... I'm looking forward to launching the next wave soon.

And from Monday we will start receiving bids to open special and alternative provision free schools. We are also inviting applications from our best universities to open new maths schools.

In 2015, there were around 3,200 Academies and Free Schools in Multi Academy Trusts. We have now around 6,200 this year and I think that's a trend which will continue. In the last 12 months, we have received 600 applications to convert to an academy.

At the same time there will still be diversity – this is one of the strengths of our education system.

Ultimately a good school is a good school – and that's what we're encouraging, whether academies and free schools, the maintained sector, comprehensives, grammar schools, faith schools and more.

We're also encouraging more people from different professions and backgrounds to sign up to be governors and trustees.

We have already had some success in recruiting trustees from business and industry through our Academy Ambassadors programme to sit on boards.

And in June I issued a call to arms, urging individuals to sign up, and their employers to let them... At the same time the National Governance Association launched their Everyone on Board campaign.

And since then we've seen the number of people registering their interest to be a governor through our Inspiring Governance programme double – with over 200 signing up every month.

I also want to say a few words about accountability.

Of course, autonomy can never be absolute. Otherwise we're talking about autocracy.

Clearly, accountability remains vital.

And, as I said earlier, children only have one chance at an education – they all deserve the best.

That's why we have Ofsted, inspections and performance measures.

We now have a better assessment system for schools.

Whereas once we measured a school's performance by its A-C pupils – now, through progress 8, everyone's progress counts, everyone's performance is measured.

This stops a disproportionate focus on the C/D borderline, to the detriment of others at both ends of the scale.

And it's fairer to those schools with the challenging intakes. It properly captures the progress they actually make on behalf of their pupils – by taking into account where they started.

There's still improvements we can make.

First and foremost, I don't want our accountability system to stifle schools and drive workload – I want it to be supportive, helping schools that need it to improve, intervening only where there's failure, and leaving the rest to get on with it.

To this end, I recently published a statement setting out key principles for how I see the accountability system working in the future, which we will be consulting on shortly. In the future, an Ofsted Inadequate judgement alone would lead to hard action to convert a Local Authority maintained school to an academy. And schools will no longer face those visits from Regional Schools Commissioners' advisers that can feel a lot like inspections.

On those rare occasions when a school is failing – be in no doubt – we will intervene fast and take the serious action necessary. We will also offer support to schools that need it sooner – preventing failure before it happens.

What about MAT accountability?

Trusts clearly have an increasingly important role in our system and we need to make sure that our system of oversight and decision-making keeps up with this. Of course, as this audience is aware, we already hold MATs to account in many ways.

When it comes to finances, academies are in fact more transparent in their reporting than other schools, for example independent scrutiny of annual accounts.

It's because we have this transparency we know all about it when there are failures – and we are well-placed to take swift action.

For example, recently strengthening the requirements in the Academies Financial Handbook on related party transactions and executive pay.

There's more we can do however. I want you to have confidence that our assessments are transparent and fair. And I want to make sure that schools

and parents can easily access vital information about a particular trust, and the performance of the system as a whole.

I have also been clear that I do not want to introduce anything that would create more workload for teachers, leaders, and governors.

It's about getting the balance right between effective assessment – without imposing new burdens with little benefit.

That is why I am working with the sector to figure out how this will work.

In particular I want to hear proposals from MAT and school leaders; your views are crucial.

So during this term we will be getting out and talking to the sector, unions and, importantly, school leaders themselves. We are convening roundtables and meetings with trust chairs and CEOs across the country.

I know that CST are thinking about what a new model of MAT assessment might look like and will be sharing that with us, so as members I encourage you to contribute to that.

Freedom. Diversity. Accountability.

That is the school system I believe in.

And I think it's the system you believe in too.

I have met many headteachers and many school trusts since taking on this job including those serving some of our most disadvantaged communities. And I know they are driven by a deep sense of mission and a moral desire to provide equality of opportunity to all pupils, wherever they are born and whatever their background.

To them, to you, I have a simple message: thank you.

Looking back on all the reforms we've made these last eight years – we've come a long way. In particular, narrowing the attainment gap between children from different backgrounds. And yet – that gap is still too wide.

Some places have seen dramatic gains, but others still need extra help.

We must keep going, spreading opportunity to the parts of the country where children are still let down by the depth and breadth of education available. Every child should be able to go to a great school.

[Political content redacted]

I want us to move forwards, together, working with organisations like yours. Listening to you and, yes, being challenged by you.

Working together to offer every child a world-class education.

Thank you.

Speech: PM's words at the regions and nations lobby drinks reception: 11 October 2018

Thank you all for coming today. I know some of you had to travel some considerable distance.

We all know that free, plural and vibrant media is the backbone of this country's democracy. This is a belief that I and the government hold very strongly. Your coverage, be it in print or broadcast, is a reflection of the rich diversity of the views that can be found right across the United Kingdom.

I think it is true to say, regional and local media is fearless. It is independent and we are committed to safeguarding its future.

I know from the discussions I have with my own local paper the significant pressures that are on regional and local press at the moment. Nowhere is this more true than in print journalism where the rapid changes in consumer behaviour and technology have led to falling circulations and advertising revenues. As we know, a quarter of local papers have closed in the past decade.

That is why we launched the Cairncross Review, to examine what more we can do to improve the long term sustainability of high quality journalism, because it is that high quality journalism, at a local and regional level, that is so important in underpinning our democracy.

Obviously, we'll wait for the review's findings and recommendations before we make specific policy decisions but nothing is off the table. This commission was launched because we see that there is a problem there and we need to have those voices looking into it for us and coming forward with their recommendations.

I have already heard of one group that has been sending in not just comments on the challenges but also some solutions. And I am sure that you all will be talking not just about the challenges you face but how you are also reacting to those challenges, to the digital age and what you are doing to improve sustainability. And I am sure you all have ideas on what the government might do to help in this area.

As a member of parliament, I have often seen that it is regional and local media which is a trusted source of news for millions of citizens. It keeps all politicians alive to what really matters beyond the Westminster bubble – understanding what is happening out there is so important for us all. Of course, we see it in our own constituencies but getting that wider reflection

of what happens is important.

When that trusted local news comes under threat, then I think democracy suffers and people become ever more vulnerable to disinformation. So this is our local press, it is your profession, it is imperative that we work together to ensure it has a very good and viable future.

So thank you for all that you do to maintain those local independent voices, and we want to work with you so that we continue to see that vibrant local and regional press. That is an important element, underpinning our democracy.