

# News story: International education study highlights UK strength

Almost 1 in 5 of all students in tertiary education in the UK are international, with the UK having one of the highest proportions of international students according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) annual Education at Glance report — demonstrating the quality and reputation of our universities and their success as a global export.

The study of education systems in 36 leading countries also found that our schools get more funding per pupil than France, Germany or Japan and the United Kingdom is now among the top three countries for education spending as a proportion of gross domestic product (GDP).

Thanks to the Government's reforms and the hard work of staff across our education system we are helping to provide a world-class education for everyone. There are now 1.9 million more children in good or outstanding schools since 2010; the results gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers has shrunk by 10% since 2011; England has risen to joint 8th in the world's primary-level reading league table; GCSEs have been reformed to match the best performing education systems in the world; and A Levels now ensure students have the knowledge and skills they need, creating qualifications parents, universities and employers can trust.

Today's publication from the OECD contains a number of findings which show even more progress, including:

- Teachers – Teachers with 15 years' experience not only earn more than the OECD average, but also more than their counterparts in European education systems, such as France, Italy and Sweden. This follows the recent announcement of a 3.5% pay increase for classroom teachers, funded by a £500 million Government grant, in addition to the tax-free bursaries worth up to £26,000 for trainee teachers in priority subjects.
- Higher education – The OECD found that the United Kingdom offers some of the most generous financial support for students. The Government has also taken steps to make the system better for graduates, including by increasing the repayment threshold, saving them up to £360 a year, and a record proportion of disadvantaged 18-year-olds accepted a place at university on A Level results day earlier this year.
- Lifelong learning – The UK has one of the highest enrolment rates of adults over 40 in education, and an above average percentage of students over 20 in vocational programmes.

- Early years – The UK has almost universal enrolment in early education at ages 3 and 4. This builds on more than 1.3 million children in England benefiting from some form of government funded early education, with more than 340,000 benefitting from our 30 hours free childcare offer, and 93% of childcare settings rated good or outstanding.
- Autonomy – Nearly two third of decisions are taken at school level in the UK meaning that, unlike the majority of other countries, schools have flexibility over timetables, as well as personnel and resource management.
- Opportunities – The percentage of young adults not in education, employment or training continues to fall. It is currently at the lowest level ever among 16- to 18-year-olds.

Secretary of State for Education Damian Hinds said:

I have been clear that I want to see a world class education for every child, whatever their background and this OECD study showing the great progress we have made in our efforts, highlighting the many strengths of our education system.

Since 2010 there are 1.9 million more children taught in good or outstanding schools, the attainment gap between rich and poor has shrunk by 10% and we have reformed qualifications to make them something parents, universities and employers can trust.

The result of this is that, as the report recognises, we have high levels of young people in education or employment, the financial gains from going to university outstrip the cost and people are more likely to continue learning throughout their lives.

The Government is continuing to invest in education in order to drive up standards even further. By 2020, school funding will rise to a record £43.5 billion, which is 50% more in real terms per pupil than it was in 2000 and by the end of the decade we will have created one million more school places since 2010 – the fastest increase for two generations. This is backed by £23 billion by 2021 to ensure every child has access to a good school place and means the average primary class size is 27.1 and the average secondary class is 21.2.

The Education Secretary has also made it a key priority to deliver a world-class technical education system, creating new T Level qualifications that will be available from 2020 and backed by an additional £500 million a year once the programme is fully rolled out. This builds on the 3.7 million apprenticeship starts since 2010, giving more people the skills they need for employment, to get on in life and strengthen the UK economy.

The report today proves that education continues to be one of the country's best exports, with ministers travelling across the world – from China to Jordan to Argentina – to share England's successes and learn from the best systems. Last week the Education Secretary visited Ireland to learn more about how they teach children to read, resulting in a strong performance in the international literacy league table. This follows England's rise in last year's PIRLS study.

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## **News story: Human Rights Council 39: UK statement for the Item 2 General Debate**

The United Kingdom warmly welcomes the High Commissioner to her first session of the Council and thanks her for her report.

The UK fully supports the OHCHR and the central role the High Commissioner's independent mandate plays in the international human rights system.

We remain concerned by human rights violations in Bangladesh, including restrictions on freedom of expression. We welcome Bangladesh's continued support to the Rohingya refugees, but call on Bangladesh to fulfil its commitments made at the Universal Periodic Review.

We also remain concerned at the continued erosion of democracy, human rights and respect for the rule of law in the Maldives. It is critical that the authorities respect fundamental freedoms. Upcoming elections must be free, fair and credible.

The national election in Cambodia was neither free nor fair. We urge the authorities to lift restrictions on political debate and media freedom, drop all charges against and restrictions on opposition leader Kem Sokha, and create the conditions for a proper functioning democracy.

Vietnam has imprisoned a number of bloggers and activists, often with heavy sentences. This further restricts the space for people to freely express their views on matters of public interest.

We urge the Philippines to conduct thorough investigations into killings associated with the "war on drugs". We are concerned by recent reports concerning land rights defenders and call on the Government to ensure their safety.

We urge the Venezuelan Government to take immediate action to facilitate humanitarian aid; the international community stands ready to assist. We also call on the Government to respect the National Assembly and release all

political prisoners.

In Cameroon we are deeply concerned at further reports of the burning of villages and schools in the Anglophone regions, and an increasing number of IDPs and refugees. We call for all parties to show restraint and reject violence.

Finally, on Sri Lanka, our views have been set out in the earlier joint statement.

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## **Official Statistics: UK and England soil nutrient balances, 2017**

*Updated:* Minor revisions to the figures for both the UK and England results.

Soil nutrient balances provide a method for estimating the annual nutrient loadings of nitrogen and phosphorus to agricultural soils.

Next update: see the [statistics release calendar](#)

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## **National Statistics: Road fuel prices: 10 September 2018**

Cost of unleaded petrol (ULSP) and unleaded diesel (ULSD) in the UK as at Monday 10 September 2018.

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## **News story: Human Rights Council 39:**

# Sri Lanka Core Group Statement

This statement is delivered on behalf of Germany, Macedonia, Montenegro and the UK as members of the Sri Lanka core group.

We welcome further recent steps Sri Lanka has taken to implement commitments made to the Council in 2015 and 2017. We welcome the Government's continued engagement with the UN system and actions to implement its National Reconciliation Action Plan and Peacebuilding Priority Plan. We applaud the Office on Missing Persons' commencement of work and encourage everyone able to advance or contribute to its work to do so. We hope the Government will establish an Office for Reparations quickly. We also welcome the return of further private land in the north, and commitments to return more military-occupied land to civilian ownership.

Nonetheless, the pace of progress on important areas remains much slower than many hoped for. As time passes, lack of progress in delivering key steps risks undermining reconciliation efforts.

In co-sponsoring resolution 30/1, Sri Lanka recognised that national accountability mechanisms are essential to dealing with the past, and to restoring confidence among its communities. These have yet to be established. The Prevention of Terrorism Act has not been replaced with a law that accords with international standards. And, though processes to consider reform to important provisions of the Constitution, including devolution of political authority, has been ongoing since 2016, a way forward has not been found. We are concerned by recent reports of harassment of and attacks on human rights defenders.

Our view remains that, with determined leadership and a clear time-bound action plan, this Government can make more progress towards delivering its Council commitments, and that doing so will better position Sri Lanka and its people to enjoy a more enduring reconciliation and prosperity. We urge Sri Lanka to prioritise and drive forward implementation of resolutions 30/1 and 34/1, before the Council next considers Sri Lanka in March.