

Education Secretary promises to harness 'energy and expertise' of teachers

A new independent government body will be created to support teachers in delivering excellent curriculum content as part of world class lessons, the Education Secretary will confirm today (Friday 11 March) as he sets out plans to help every child in the country reach the true height of their potential.

Under its mission to level up standards across the school system, the government is targeting 90% of children leaving primary school having achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and maths by 2030, up from 65% in 2019.

Speaking at the Association of School and College Leaders Conference the Education Secretary will set out how the upcoming launch of the first Schools White Paper since 2016 will deliver on this vision for excellent teaching, through:

- The conversion of Oak National Academy into an entirely new Arm's Length Body to the Department for Education – focused on supporting teachers to deliver excellent lessons and building on Oak's success;
- Strengthening the support system in place for teachers throughout their career – by re-endowing the Education Endowment Foundation to continue researching and developing best practice in teaching methods and re-committing to delivering 500,000 teacher training opportunities by 2024 for teachers from trainee to head level; and
- Delivering £30,000 starting salaries and offering retention payments for teachers in priority subjects in areas currently with lower attainment to attract and retain the best teachers.

Speaking about the evolution of Oak National Academy at the conference, the Secretary of State is expected to say:

The biggest asset we have in changing the lives of children for generations to come is the energy and expertise of our teachers and school leaders.

You can't have a great education if you don't have a great teacher. But of course, great teachers need great support.

Oak National Academy has certainly been one of our great achievements. It was created by teachers, for teachers, and showed brilliantly what the profession was capable of in the hour of need.

Building on the nearly 3,500 hours of video lesson content it provided during the pandemic, we will now establish Oak as a new arms-length curriculum body.

This is important because the data shows 46% of primary teachers plan lessons from scratch. This is a drain on teachers' time and we're going to fix it.

Curriculum design is complex and we want to share the very best practice so teachers can draw inspiration from evidence based, carefully sequenced examples.

Instead of each teacher reinventing the wheel, they will be able to access content, for free, that continuously evolves and gets better and better on the back of feedback from teachers across the country – saving time and improving lessons immeasurably.

At the heart of this body will be collaboration and partnership, and I am committed to building on the “by teachers, for teachers” approach that has been a key success factor for Oak National Academy.

Ed Vainker, CEO of the Reach Foundation, the organisation that established Oak National Academy, said:

The Reach Foundation is proud of the role it has played stewarding Oak National Academy and is grateful to partner organisations for their immense voluntary contribution.

We are pleased that the government has committed to sustaining Oak in perpetuity and have agreed to transfer it to the DfE, on the basis that it will be fully independent and will always remain free and in public ownership.

Under the framework already provided by the national curriculum, the new curriculum body will work with a diverse range of teachers and experts from across the sector to facilitate the creation of curriculum maps and thousands of downloadable lessons and resources, which will be made freely available to all teachers, parents and children.

Its use will be entirely optional for teachers, with the intention of supporting those who use it to cut down on the workload pressure caused by lesson planning and curriculum design.

The new body is expected to become fully operational from Autumn following a transition phase, with its final name to be confirmed, and its first new products available to teachers in September 2023.

It will work with the Education Endowment Foundation to ensure its activity is informed by the best available evidence and aligns with best practice.

The Schools White Paper is expected to be published later in March, and will set out a plan for every child to get a great education and the right support, in the right place, and at the right time.