

Hinds: A world class education for everyone

Education Secretary, Damian Hinds, speaking yesterday at Conservative Party Conference at The ICC, Birmingham, said:

“Good afternoon everyone and thank you James for that introduction. James said a good education can do amazing things, and I certainly agree with that sentiment.

“You know whenever I ask anyone to think back to their education, what really made a difference for them when they were at school, you know I have yet to come back – to get the answer back – “it was a smart board” or “a text book” or “an exam” or “a scheme of work”. The answer that comes back is always about a person. People talk about Miss Smith, Mr Jones, Mrs O’Neil. Because education is all about that person standing at the front of the class. Those inspiring individuals, those 450,000 teachers that we have out there, they deserve and they have our admiration, our respect and our thanks.

“And you know since 2010, those teachers have made some amazing things happen. Assisted by the reforms initiated by my predecessors, by Nicky Morgan, Justine Greening and of course Michael Gove. We are back in the international top ten for primary reading. We have a reformed curriculum and examinations. We have thousands of schools that have been set free as academies. We’ve got 1.9 million more young people studying in good or outstanding schools. And the gap has been narrowed. The gap between the rich and the poor in attainment has narrowed at every stage and every phase from nursery school to university entry.

“Now, that is a record of which you can be proud. You should be proud. But you shouldn’t be satisfied. We should not be satisfied until we can say that we truly have a world class education for everyone. Wherever they come from, wherever they’re going and whatever route they’re taking through our education system. Until we have made sure that in every region and in every group of our society, opportunity is truly equal.

“And of course a world class education depends on our investment in the future. I say investment, because education spending isn’t just public spending. It is an investment. An investment in the future of those children going through our schools. Also an investment in the future of our country. And as you can see, we are strong investors in education when you look at us compared to other key comparator nations like the G7.

“We have also been investing heavily in the capacity of our system to ensure we have a good supply of good and outstanding places in our schools. In contrast to Labour, who cut 100,000 places in our school system in the years running up to 2010, by the end of this decade, we will have added a million school places to our system. And we think that when a school is a good school, when it’s giving a good education, and when it’s popular with

parents, that school should be able to expand so that more young people can benefit from what's on offer. That includes if it is a grammar school. And we also believe that there is and always has been a very important role in our system for faith schools and we will continue to invest in free schools that have brought such diversity and innovation to our system and I was proud to see another 53 free schools opening this term for the new academic year as well as the hundreds already open.

"I can see in the front row and – just give me a moment to introduce and to thank them – the brilliant DfE ministerial team, starting with Nick Gibb who has been there from the very start and has done so much to drive academic standards in our schools, and particularly the focus on early reading and phonics. Anne Milton with her infectious dedication to building up the skills base in our country, to apprenticeships and to colleges. Sam Gyimah, working alongside our excellent higher education sector and being such an effective voice for the student. Nadhim Zahawi, looking after early years and special needs and how we look after those children who are the most vulnerable in our society, those who are in care. And Lord Agnew, our minister in the Lords, who has brought his own expertise from a leading multi-academy trust to his role as Minister for the school system. We are also very lucky to be supported in Parliament by our team of David Morris, Jack Brereton, Anne-Marie Trevelyan, our Commons Whip Amanda Milling and James Younger in the Lords.

"Now, we are all spurred on by three key imperatives. The first is progress. Because we think and I know you think that it is self-evident that every generation should have better opportunities than the last. And you think that every year we need to raise our sights higher and we need to reach wider to make sure we unlock the talent and potential in every child in our country.

"Secondly, we know that on the education of this generation of children lies the future prospects and prosperity of our country. Because it's productivity growth that allows people to be paid a little bit more each year and allows us to afford more for the excellent public services which we all value so much.

"Third, preparedness: being ready for whatever comes in an uncertain world. Part of this is about being ready to seize the opportunities that will come in global trade after we leave the European Union. But it is also about preparedness for the change that's happening in the world as we speak. If you think about the technological advances that are happening at the moment. If you think about artificial intelligence, voice computing, the internet, advanced robotics. Any of these on their own could constitute a revolution. But right now they are happening all at the same time. And so we've got a pace of change that is truly unprecedented. Now, people sometimes talk about all this technological change in the world as a threat and something to be overcome and there are issues to deal with. But it is an opportunity for those who are ready, those who are equipped to take advantage of this change and we need to make sure that this country is one of the countries that seizes technology and makes it work for us, not one of the countries that technological change gets done to.

“So to deal with these challenges, to take the maximum advantage of these opportunities, now more than ever before, we need a focused and sustained plan for education and skills.

“That starts with academic standards. And the way that the knowledge economy has developed and with the emerging superpowers of the economies of the east, we can't afford any let up on academic standards and we need to go further and we need to make sure we are putting enough emphasis on the subjects of future, for the global Britain of the future in this changed world. So we need to think about the languages of mankind and the languages of machines.

“We also need to make sure that all our young people leave our education system with the basic essential skills that they're going to need with them in life whatever path they end up taking, whatever job they end up doing. Central to that is English and Maths. We have made a lot of progress on English and Maths. But we need to go further. Today, I'm announcing 32 primary schools and 21 colleges which will act as centres of excellence to spread best practice respectively for early literacy teaching and the teaching of Maths aged 16 and above.

“We also know and any teacher will tell you that good teaching and learning relies on a calm classroom. Pupil behaviour is absolutely essential. And so I'm also announcing today a further £10 million to support the spreading of best practice and knowledge on behaviour management and classroom management so that can be very widely deployed.

“Now, I think we can say that there are genuinely large parts of our academic system which are truly world class. Many of our state schools, large parts of our university sector, are world class but there is another area which in years gone by has not had enough focus. I'm talking about technical and vocational education, which for decades has not had as much attention as it should. We have already made great strides forwards increasing the quality level of apprenticeships and with more people starting on higher level apprenticeships and even degree level apprenticeships.

“You will have heard the announcement yesterday that we're going to accelerate the process of moving on to these higher standards, employer-set apprenticeships that young people benefit from so much.

“You have all heard of A Levels right? Tell me yes. You've all heard of A Levels but you may not yet have heard of T Levels? Who has heard of T Levels? Good, well those of you who haven't yet, you will do soon, because within a couple of years we are bringing in this new qualification for 16 to 18 year olds called the T Level. It will be a direct alternative to A Levels, but focused on those key vocational subjects. Today I'm announcing a £38 million capital pot to make sure that the colleges teaching those first T Levels from 2020 can do so with really world class equipment and facilities.

“And you also know how important careers advice is and guidance for young people and the key role that is played by careers advisers in schools, and so we are also going to be doubling the number of trained careers leaders in schools so young people are aware about all those different routes. So they

don't think there is only one route they can take to success and they are aware of all the different career options available to them.

"We are also going to be reviewing the higher level qualifications, those at so-called level four and level five, that are the direct alternative to going to university for young people at 18, and we carry on our design work on the national retraining scheme, so that all throughout their lives people have the opportunity to upgrade and change their skills, so that lifelong learning stops being a phrase and starts being a reality.

"Now, qualifications are clearly an absolutely essential part of education. They are, if you like, the paper passports that you leave school or college or university with, and take with you into your career and into your life. But they are not the whole of the story, and I invite you now to think back to the kids you were at school, and see if you can remember one that left school with nothing or next to nothing, by way of GCSEs or possibly, in some cases, 0 levels, depending on our age. Someone who came away with almost nothing in qualifications, but they still went on and did something really quite amazing in life. Can anyone think of that person? I am going to suggest to you that quite often what makes the difference is something that we might call character. Something that you will never see on a certificate of education, but you know it when you see it. I mean things like determination and drive. I mean the tenacity to stick with the task at hand, and the ability to bounce back from the knocks that life inevitably brings. Now these character traits are closely connected with something I hear all the time about from employers. So-called workplace skills. Things like teamwork. Commitment. The ability to look at the customer in the eye, and want to make the sale. Character is also connected to general health and well-being, and we are much more aware of this area, and rightly so, in the education sector now than in decades gone by. That's why I am pleased that we are going to be introducing mental health education into schools within the next couple of years.

"Now actually, I don't think you can just walk into a class of 28 kids one day and say today, we are going to learn about character. Today we are going to do drive and determination. Of course you can't, but these are things you pick up a lot from what happens at school, and in particular, I think, extracurricular activities play an important part. So I'm going to be working closely with Jeremy Wright on the new youth performance partnerships, and working with Gavin Williamson to make sure that more young people can get involved with the cadets. And for many young people, it is sport that really unlocks their talents and potential. In the last few years, we have been able to commit, to vote over £900 million to the primary sports premium. And now, working together with Tracy Crouch, the Sports Minister, we are going to be bringing in a new cross Government initiative for a school sports action plan, to make sure that sporting opportunities, and we will do this together with bodies like the RFU, with the Premier League, and with England netball, making sure that those opportunities are spread as widely as possible and that every child is able to benefit from what sports can bring.

"Ladies and gentlemen, like many of you, I have been coming to this conference for many years, and in all those years that I have been coming, as

a YC, an activist, a Parliamentary candidate and more recently as an MP, I think around the corridors and conference centres like this, and around the fringe events, and the cafes and the bars, I think I have heard more conversations about education than I have about anything else, because we Conservatives know that education is the key to the future.

“It was the first One Nation Conservative, the original, Benjamin Disraeli who said, “Upon the education of the people of this country, the fate of this country depends.” Since then, it has been Conservatives who have most resolutely acted upon that. From Balfour to Butler, from Baker to Gove.

“But you know as we stand here today in 2018, we can’t take for granted what has been achieved since 2010. Because we learnt from Liverpool last week, that the Labour Party wants to put it all at risk. They want to undo our reforms and turn back the clock. I was thinking about what a parent would think as they heard the speech of the Shadow Education Secretary, when she said she wanted to take all publicly funded schools back into Council control, back into what she called the ‘mainstream public sector’ with what she called a ‘common rule book’. Well you know, for a parent whose child has been thriving at a free school or an academy, how they must have shuddered when they heard those words. But ladies and gentleman, we will stand up for those families, we will defend the right for those children to have an outstanding education, because while Labour go off on their ideological journeys, that child only has one chance at their education and they deserve the very best.

“So far from going backwards, ladies and gentleman, we need to move forwards with our reforms. We need to ensure that the vocational and the technical, are absolutely on a par with the academic. We need to make sure that we extend our reforms in all regions, in all parts of the country. That all parts of our society have equal opportunity, that everywhere we see raised expectations and raised aspirations, and when that happens, then we will be able to say, this is a world class education for everyone. Thank you.”

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