

# More support for local areas to drive up school standards

The government has today (Wednesday 19 May) reinforced its commitment to levelling up education across the country with new, locally targeted initiatives to make sure as many pupils as possible can benefit from being in a great school.

The funding and support for academy trusts is central to a transformative reform package set out by the Education Secretary Gavin Williamson during a [recent speech](#) to the Confederation of School Trusts.

The announcement is one of a range of new policies set out by the Prime Minister today which focus on better access to high-quality education, improved infrastructure in our town centres, and more public sector jobs outside of London – all of which are at the heart of levelling up.

Ten million pounds will be invested to support four areas – Plymouth, Ashfield & Mansfield, South Sefton & North Liverpool, and North Durham & City – where a low proportion of pupils go to Good or Outstanding schools and there is high potential for rapid improvement.

The investment will help local schools join strong trusts and drive up standards with the support of experienced school and trust leaders.

Up to half of the £10 million funding for the four areas receiving intensive support will be channelled through the Trust Capacity Fund, which opens for applications today from trusts looking to support more schools in those areas and across the country.

The Department is also providing £800,000 in setup funding towards a pilot of five new Catholic multi-academy trusts and two new Church of England trusts to provide more church schools the opportunity to join strong trusts across the country.

Education Secretary, Gavin Williamson, said:

I am determined to focus this government's resources on the areas of the country where the number of pupils in Good or Outstanding schools is lower than average, as we build back better and recover from the impact of the pandemic.

An education at a great school is the best way to make sure pupils are supported to catch up on any academic learning or development they may have missed, and fulfil their potential. The best way to create more great schools is to give all schools the support of a strong multi-academy trust to help them improve.

I am encouraging all school trusts today to consider applying for

funding to expand and support more schools, particularly in those areas of the country where there are still too few opportunities for children to attend a great school.

Chief Executive of Plymouth City Council, Tracey Lee, said:

I am delighted that Plymouth is one of the first few areas to have been selected to take part in this significant national initiative.

I am sure all education providers in the city share the excitement that Plymouth is recognised by the Government as an area that has good foundations with a place-based collaboration and is most likely to achieve success as a trailblazer of this national initiative.

There are many challenges in improving the educational achievements for all children and young people in Plymouth, and we do not underestimate these. This initiative will support us in facing these head on and achieving our vision that all children and young people in the city are able to aspire and achieve and have a bright future.

An additional Catholic 'turnaround trust' is also being set up as a joint pilot with the Catholic Education Service and Catholic Dioceses in the North West. It will work with Catholic schools within the Dioceses of Liverpool and Shrewsbury that require swift support from a strong trust – providing an additional boost to efforts to secure rapid improvement in the South Sefton & North Liverpool area.

Director of the Catholic Education Service, Paul Barber, said:

As the second largest provider of schools in the country and one of the government's longstanding partners in the delivery of education, we warmly welcome this announcement.

Catholic academies and multi-academy trusts play an important part in our education landscape and it is essential that they are allowed to flourish in a manner that respects their Catholic ethos. We strongly believe these pilot programmes will give Catholic schools the confidence to join a suitable Catholic Academy Trust and witness the benefits of working within a family of schools.

Chief Education Officer at the Church of England, Nigel Genders, said:

This pilot together with the Government's financial commitment will enable Church of England dioceses to use their broad experience to further enrich the academy sector by growing distinctive diocesan

MATs that will sustain and improve the experience of hundreds of thousands of children in Church of England schools, supporting our aim of serving the whole community, and allowing young people to flourish and live well in an ever changing educational landscape.