

New drive to continue boosting standards in schools

A raft of new measures to help struggling schools, tackle underperformance and ensure standards continue to rise have been unveiled by Education Secretary Gavin Williamson.

Outstanding schools will no longer be exempt from routine Ofsted inspection so parents can be confident their children's schools are continuing to deliver the best education.

Some 'outstanding' schools have not been inspected for a decade and this programme will ensure that parents have up to date information about the quality of education their children are receiving, and that standards remain high.

Alongside this, more funding will be made available to help top performing academies across the country to expand to support other schools and help them deliver the best possible education.

A new specialist academy trust will also be set up specifically to take on and turn round the most challenging schools struggling with long term underperformance.

The trust will be piloted in the North of England and offer direct support from school leaders with a proven track record in improving education.

For schools that have consistently been rated requires improvement by Ofsted, we will launch a new programme of leadership support by giving hundreds of them more help from experienced school leaders and evidence-based support programmes and working with Ofsted so that it can provide more detailed analysis on areas for improvement.

The announcement today (1 September) comes days after the Prime Minister delivered the biggest ever cash funding boost of £14 billion over three years for education and set out the government's ambition to close the opportunity gap and ensure every child, regardless of where they come from, has access to a great education. The funding package for 5-16 schools includes £2.6 billion for 2020/21, £4.8 billion for 21/22, and £7.1 billion for 22/23 compared to 19/20. This will bring the schools budget to £52.2bn in 22/23.

This comes as 61 new free schools open their doors for the new school year, providing more school places and building on the success of free schools across the country. Ofsted's latest information shows that 84% of all free schools with inspection reports published by the end of June are rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding'. This includes predecessor ratings for free schools that have since been re-brokered.

The Prime Minister made clear that his government will continue to build on rising school standards, level up education spending, and to give schools the

powers they need to deal with bad behaviour and bullying.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Every parent wants to know their child is getting a great education and I will leave no stone unturned in my drive to deliver that. Education standards in this country have been transformed since 2010, and I am determined to make sure those schools that are leading the way are sharing their expertise and lifting up others so every child, no matter where they are from has the best possible start in life.

This government has delivered on its promise to deliver a huge cash boost for the education system and now we will continue our relentless focus on standards by backing teachers, school leaders and the sector as a whole to do what they do best and deliver the best for our children.

Plans set out today will include:

- Reintroducing regular Ofsted inspections for outstanding schools by removing rules which exempted top-rated schools from routine inspection, so that parents have up to date information about their child's school and can be confident that schools rated outstanding really are providing the highest standards
- Increasing the level of support available to some of the most challenging requires improvement schools – those that have not been good in over a decade in multiple inspections – by giving hundreds of them more help from experienced school leaders and evidence-based support programmes and working with Ofsted so that it can provide more detailed analysis on areas for improvement
- Piloting a new academy trust in the north, specifically established to take on the most challenging schools, where there is no other local academy trust with sufficient capacity available, offering support from directors with a proven track record of turning around underperforming schools
- Building on an existing £17m fund to support our strongest academy trusts to expand into areas of weak capacity and where improvement is most needed – furthering the success of the academies programme since 2010 as a powerful vehicle for driving school improvement
- Expand the School Resource Management programme to ensure the extra funding provided to schools is focussed on delivering better outcomes

for pupils, reduces wasteful expenditure and improves efficiency

- Work with Ofsted to ensure all reports also include a rating for financial management and oversight within the school, academy, college or trust in order to ensure best practice is shared across the sector

Today's announcement will accelerate efforts to improve underperforming schools, furthering recent plans to strengthen the leadership of up to 2,400 schools nationwide and building on policies that have seen hundreds of thousands of children benefit from an education in good or outstanding sponsored academies that were, typically, previously council-run schools.

Plans include piloting a specialist trust run by school leaders with a proven track record of turning around underperforming schools to raise standards and put them back onto a sound financial footing. This new trust will be expected to take on the most challenging schools, by offering a route into a strong academy trust that allows school improvement to begin immediately.

Since 2012, schools rated 'outstanding' by Ofsted have been exempt from routine inspection, freeing them up to continue to focus on providing an excellent education for pupils without unnecessary intervention.

This commitment remains, but many schools need up to date information about their performance and parents deserve greater assurance that the education in these schools remains the highest quality. The department will consult on how best to do this, and subject to parliamentary approval, bring these schools back into a regular inspection cycle.

This package of measures to turn around underperforming schools today follows the announcement of £14bn for primary and secondary schools in England between now and 2022/23 – delivering on the Prime Minister's pledge to increase school funding to give all young people the same opportunities to succeed regardless of where they live or go to school.