

News story: Education Secretary to set out vision for “clearer” school system

Education Secretary Damian Hinds will clearly set out how the Government will “trust school leaders to get on with the job” by clarifying who schools are accountable to and boosting development opportunities for new teachers.

In an address to more than 350 school leaders at the National Association of Head Teachers’ (NAHT) annual conference in Liverpool on Friday (4 May), the Secretary of State will set out plans for a clearer system of accountability that will let good schools get on with their job, free from the “spectre” of multiple inspections by making it clear that “the only people who should go to schools for inspections are Ofsted”.

Mr Hinds will announce a consultation to replace the “confusing” system of having both floor and coasting standards to measure school performance, with a single measure to trigger support for schools. This will be backed by a clear statement on when schools convert to academy status to drive improvement.

In a pledge to the profession, published today, the Secretary of State will underline his commitment to give school leaders the confidence to raise standards in their schools and free up teachers to focus on what really matters in the classroom.

The Education Secretary is expected to say:

Accountability is vital. Children only get one shot at an education and we owe them the best...where they are being let down we need to take action quickly – so no one ends up left behind.

But what I’ve found from speaking to many of you these last few months is that there is also real confusion within the sector... I believe school leaders need complete clarity on how the accountability system will operate.

I’m clear that Ofsted is the body that can provide an independent, rounded judgement of a school’s performance.

This means we will not be forcibly turning schools into academies unless Ofsted has judged it to be Inadequate.

I believe strongly that becoming an academy can bring enormous benefits to schools. Hundreds of schools every year voluntarily choose to become academies and I want this to be a positive choice for more and more schools as we move forward.

We must also have a system that does more than just deal with failure... But we will do so in the right way, and there will be a

single, transparent data trigger for schools to be offered support – which we will consult on.

I intend this to replace the current confusing system of having both below the floor and coasting standards for performance..

I have a clear message to schools and their leaders: I trust you to get on with the job.

There are a record number of teachers working in our schools – 15,500 more than in 2010 – and increasing numbers are returning to the profession. Thanks to the efforts of this talented generation of teachers, alongside the government's bold reforms, there are now 1.9 million more children in good or outstanding schools than in 2010.

To build on this, the Education Secretary will set out plans to improve early career support and development.

Working with school leaders, new high-quality training opportunities will be developed to boost career progression and support the record number of teachers in our schools to become leaders in their field, including:

- Extending on-the-job training and support for trainee and new teachers to two years, so they get the best possible start to their career;
- Creating early career development opportunities for teachers through a new framework that schools will follow, developed in partnership with teachers, school leaders and education experts; and
- Introducing more flexible working practices that will put the profession on a par with other industries, with a £5 million fund to help experienced teachers take a sabbatical.

The Secretary of State will continue:

All of us have a shared goal of making sure teaching remains an attractive, fulfilling profession.

We will take an unflinching look at the things that discourage people from going into teaching or make them consider leaving... and we will also look at how we support teachers to get better at what they do and hone their expertise and career progression.

We will be introducing an enhanced offer of support for new teachers – including extending the induction period to two years – and we will work with the profession to develop a new early career content framework that will set out all the training and mentoring a teacher is entitled to in those first years.

I want teachers to be able to develop and progress through clearer career pathways, including for those who want to stay in the classroom ... and I want schools to be attractive 21st Century workplaces.

Today's announcements will be backed by the NAHT, as the Education Secretary's address marks the beginning of two days of speeches and debates on the development and improvement of the teaching profession.

General Secretary of the NAHT, Paul Whiteman, said:

The announcements the Secretary of State is making today will be widely welcomed by NAHT's members. Accountability is an essential part of our publicly funded education system but it is also one of the main drivers of workload; a big reason why many talented people leave, and often a limiting factor on the ambitions of schools.

It's absolutely right that there should only be one agency with the remit to inspect schools. Clarity about the standards that are expected is just what we've been calling for.

Removing the coasting and floor standards will do much to address the confusion felt by many school leaders. It will be important that the new support standard is set at the right level and helps direct rapid, high-quality, funded support to the schools that need it most.

We have a track record of working with the government on improvements to the system and we look forward to working with them to help define the detail behind these new proposals and to make sure that these joint ambitions are realised.

The pledges made today follow on from the [Secretary of State's speech in March](#), during which he made clear that his top priority is to ensure teaching remains an attractive and fulfilling profession, underpinned by a commitment to tackle unnecessary workload. A myth buster video on school inspections featuring the Secretary of State and the Chief Inspector for Schools, Amanda Spielman – launched at the ASCL conference – has had more than 75,000 views to date.

Today's announcements build on measures already supporting teachers' development and efforts to attract the best and brightest recruits into the profession, including a Flexible Working Summit with business and education leaders to explore how the profession can be more flexible – including through part time roles – which resulted in a number of pledges.

In full, the Education Secretary will announce:

- The department's initial response to the consultation on Qualified Teacher Status;
- A £5 million fund to support more teachers to take a sabbatical – such as a year working in industry relevant to their field – and a research project to introduce more flexible hours in the profession;
- More detail on the recruitment and retention strategy announced at the Association of School and College Leaders' conference in March;
- More support, offered proactively, for schools that are in danger of

failing; and

- The launch of an external advisory group and working group with teaching unions to help develop the department's strategy.