

News story: Multimillion investment in early years education and boost social mobility

An investment to better support early years education and child development spearheads a range of initiatives announced today to halve the number of children finishing reception year without the early communication or reading skills they need by 2028.

[Latest research](#) shows more than a quarter of four-and-five-year-olds (28 per cent) lacked the early communication and literacy skills expected by the end of reception year. The 'expected level' includes, for example, a child being able to express themselves clearly and read simple sentences.

In a [speech](#) to the Resolution Foundation, Education Secretary Damian Hinds set out his ambition to halve this number through a range of measures and a new coalition of organisations to look at ways of supporting parents with helping children learn new words and develop their communication skills.

He also unveiled details of a £30 million fund, part of an investment announced in the government's social mobility action plan, to create more nursery places run by successful schools in disadvantaged areas so more children can access a high-quality early education. This fulfils a government manifesto pledge to help primary schools develop nurseries where they do not currently have the facilities to do so.

Schools will be invited to run projects that demonstrate innovative approaches to closing the attainment gap between disadvantaged children and their more affluent peers, with a focus on creating partnerships between schools and councils, Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs), or charities.

Alongside this another £20 million will be spent on training and professional development for early years staff in disadvantaged areas to increase their ability to support children's early speech and language development. This work will drive up standards in the pre-school years, so more children arrive at school with the foundations in place to make the most of primary school.

On top of the new ambition and investment in early years provision, the Education Secretary announced other measures to improve social mobility:

- the Office for Students will look at how universities – particularly the most elite – can reach out to children from different backgrounds;
- a new data project building on Raj Chetty's world-renowned work mapping social mobility in America, linking education and income data and breaking it down by region to directly show the impact of education on future earning prospects. The data will provide a map and measure of social mobility and help target interventions more effectively;
- a departmental review of non-GCSE qualifications for 14 to 16 year olds

- to make sure the courses on offer to students are of high quality; and
- new research by the Social Mobility Commission looking at the impact of extra-curricular activities on social mobility. This will help ensure the most effective practices are scaled up and targeted at the areas that need them most.

In his speech, Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

We need a country that works for everyone – because what is progress for our society, if we're not doing more for the people who start out with the biggest disadvantages? A strong society, a strong economy, does not leave people behind.

It's time to raise our ambitions, to expect more and to expect better for every child, whatever their background – and to build a country where everyone can make the most of themselves.

During the speech Mr Hinds set out his 'Seven Key Truths' that drive better outcomes for children by giving them the support, skills and character building experiences that will unlock their potential.

These include:

- the early learning from birth to age three;
- a good school education;
- high-quality teaching;
- making more extracurricular activities available;
- increasing access for university;
- second chances later in life; and
- developing resilience and emotional wellbeing.