

Press release: Government drive to boost attainment in North East schools

Thousands of children across the North East will benefit from a £24million investment to improve school standards and boost their career prospects.

The Education Secretary Damian Hinds will today (Thursday 14 March) set out plans to support up to thirty schools through the Opportunity North East (ONE) initiative – a multi-million pound Government-led programme to improve social mobility and raise aspirations for children. These schools include:

- Duke's Secondary School, Northumberland
- Trinity Catholic College, Middlesbrough
- Berwick Academy, Northumberland
- St Aidan's Church of England Academy, Darlington
- Haughton Academy, Darlington
- Unity Academy, Middlesbrough
- Hetton School, Sunderland

These ONE Vision schools, as they will be known, will be partnered with high-performing institutions and given bespoke support to raise standards and help up to 25,000 young people learn the skills and knowledge that will help unlock their potential.

At a summit of schools, education experts, head teachers, business and university leaders hosted at Middlesbrough Football Club today, Schools Minister Lord Agnew will set out more detail on Mr Hinds' plans – first announced in October – to help give young people in the North East more support and help as they transition from education to work or further education.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

“These thirty schools will be at the forefront of our plans to drive up academic standards, boost social mobility and raise aspirations for children in the north-east.

“They will receive more support to boost their performance and tackle the issues holding young people back – delivering on my determination to do something about the fact that, while talent and potential are evenly spread, opportunities sometimes are not.

“While there has rightly been focus on differential rates of attending a top university according to ethnicities, actually a young person from the North East is around half as likely to go to Oxford as a young person from an ethnic minority.

“I want everyone to feel that this is a country that works for them and want every child to have access to a world class education – and I'm looking

forward to seeing these schools flourish.”

The 30 ‘ONE Vision Schools’ will receive:

- Expert guidance from education leaders, bespoke to the needs of each individual school, to improve standards; and
- A high-performing partner school, which has a track record in turning around underperforming schools with similar characteristics to those, to provide support and share best practice.

The Education Secretary launched Opportunity North East in October last year, pledging £24 million to tackle issues holding back young people from the region.

Young people in the North East are the least likely to apply to higher education of any region in the country. In fact, 18-years olds from London are 50% more likely to apply to university than 18-year olds from the North East.

The region also has:

- some of the best performing primary schools in the country, but secondary school performance is below other regions; and
- one of the highest proportions of young people not in education, employment or training after year 11. Opportunity North East aims to tackle these issues by:
 - Investing £12 million in targeted approaches to improve the transition from primary to secondary school, drive up standards – particularly at secondary level – and improve outcomes for pupils post 16;
 - Working with secondary schools and colleges to encourage young people to consider university, degree apprenticeships and other high quality technical education options;
 - Partnering with local businesses to improve job prospects for young people across the region; and
 - Investing a further £12 million to boost early career training for new teachers and help improve the quality of teaching and raise standards in the region’s schools, ahead of roll-out in other regions.

CEO of Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy Trust Hugh Hegarty said:

“This Government initiative is very welcome and will bring significant benefits for young people across the region.

“As a Multi-Academy Trust, we have a strong reputation for knowing our schools and ensuring resources are accurately deployed. We will benefit from partnering with schools from outside the North East as this adds to our capacity to improve life opportunities for all our young people.”

CEO of Northumberland Church of England Academy Trust Alan Hardie said:

“Northumberland Church of England Academy Trust is committed to ensuring that all of our pupils have an excellent education and gain the best possible outcomes.

“We are delighted that Duke’s Secondary School has been offered support from the ONE Vision programme as it is completely aligned with our focus on continuously improving the quality of teaching and learning. We believe that the tailored support from ONE Vision will accelerate our progress towards achieving the high aspirations we have for our students.

CEO of North East Learning Trust Lesley Powell CBE said:

“The Opportunity North East initiative is a welcome opportunity to raise educational achievement, aspirations and expectations for children across our region.

“Our research school at Shotton Hall can play an important part in realising some of the aims of the initiative by helping schools and teachers to better use research-based evidence in their classrooms to improve teaching and learning. This is an exciting opportunity to further make a difference, and I’m delighted that we are in the position to support more schools to raise standards.”

Today’s announcement is part of a government drive to improve education and boost productivity in the North of England, and follows on from investment in the Northern Powerhouse strategy.