

## **Press release: Commonwealth Day 2019: PM message**

Today, on Commonwealth Day, I am proud to celebrate the United Kingdom's part in this diverse family of nations. It is fitting that in the group's 70th year our theme is 'A Connected Commonwealth'. In an increasingly interlinked world, the bonds between Commonwealth citizens, organisations and governments provide a uniquely valuable network for international co-operation.

At the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in London last year, my fellow leaders and I agreed concrete steps to achieve a fairer, more secure, more prosperous and more sustainable future for the group's 2.4 billion people. As Chair-in-Office, the UK is now working with the whole Commonwealth to deliver those commitments.

Over the past year, our leadership of the new Commonwealth Clean Oceans Alliance with Vanuatu has encouraged 24 member countries to commit to specific actions to tackle marine plastic pollution. And over 2,300 women-owned businesses have signed up to the UK-funded Commonwealth 'She Trades' programme, boosting female entrepreneurship.

The collective determination to deliver the Commonwealth's vision for a common future has never been stronger. I continue to firmly and wholeheartedly believe in the good that this family of nations can do.

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## **Press release: Thousands of places created in new special free schools**

Thousands of new school places are being created for children with special educational needs or those facing additional challenges in mainstream education, providing tailored support to help children thrive.

Every region in the country will benefit from a new school, which include 37 special free schools and two alternative provision free schools. This will create around 3,500 additional school places, boosting choice for parents and providing specialist support and education for pupils with complex needs such as autism, severe learning difficulties or mental health conditions, and those who may have been or are at risk of being excluded from mainstream schools.

It follows a commitment from the Education Secretary Damian Hinds to give the green light to all high-quality special free school bids last December when he announced an additional £250 million for local authorities for their high

needs budget. This builds on an additional £100m of capital funding for local authorities to invest in additional places and better facilities for pupils with special educational needs and disability at mainstream schools, special schools and colleges, taking total investment from 2018 to 2021 to £365 million.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

Parents rightly want choice of where their child goes to school and to know that the education and support they receive will ignite that spark of potential that exists in all of us, so they can go on and succeed.□

We want every school to be a school for children with special educational needs and disabilities. That's why we are investing significant funding into Special Education Needs units attached to mainstream schools and in additional support so children with education, health and care plans can access mainstream education.

But we recognise some children require more specialist support. These new special free schools and alternative provision schools will make sure that more complex needs can be provided to help support every child to have a quality education.

Applications will now open in the 39 successful local authorities to find providers – including community groups, teachers, charities, existing education providers and other organisations – that will run them.

Of the 37 new special free schools:

- three will be in the North East, providing over 200 places in total mostly for children with social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH);
- six will be in the North West, providing over 400 places including for children with SEMH, Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Severe Learning Difficulty (SLD) and speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN);
- five will be in Yorkshire and the Humber, providing over 500 places including for children with SEMH, ASD, SLD, Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD) and SLCN;
- one will be in the East Midlands, providing 50 places for children with SEMH;
- four will be in the West Midlands, providing over 400 places including for children with SEMH, ASD and Multiple Learning Difficulties (MLD);
- four will be in the East of England, providing over 300 places including for children with SEMH, ASD and SLCN;
- five will be in London, providing over 400 places including for children with SEMH, ASD and SLCN;
- three will be in the South East, providing over 300 places including for children with SEMH and ASD;
- six will be in the South West, providing 500 places including for

children with SEMH, ASD, Complex Learning Difficulties (CLD) and SLCN; and

- two AP free schools will provide over 100 places in the West Midlands for children who have been, or are at risk of being, excluded from mainstream education.

Dame Christine Lenehan, Director of the Council for Disabled Children, said:

We are pleased to welcome the new wave of special free schools and the extra choice they will bring to the system for children with special educational needs. We look forward to seeing them working in partnership with parents, children and local agencies to deliver the best outcomes for children.

Leora Cruddas, Chief Executive of the Confederation of School Trusts, said:

These additional school places will enable children with special needs and those facing difficulties to have access to high quality education provision. Over the past week, there has been much debate in the media about children and young people whose social, emotional and behavioural needs make them vulnerable. Today's announcement of a range of specialist provision in every region of the country is hugely welcome.

The 39 new free schools will offer an extra 3459 extra places for pupils. The schools add to the 34 special and 42 AP free schools already open, and come on top of a further 54 special and 12 AP free schools approved in a previous application rounds, which will open in future. The total number of special free schools will come to 125 upon completion.

Notes to editors:

- Information about the 39 areas, as well as guidance about the application process for the competitions, has been published on GOV.UK.
- The 37 special and two alternative provision free schools will be established in the following local authority areas:
- Special free schools – Bexley, Bromley, Bury, Cornwall, Dorset, Essex, Halton, Hartlepool, Hertfordshire, Kent, Kingston upon Hull, Kingston upon Thames, Leeds, Leicestershire, Newham, Norfolk, North Lincolnshire, North Somerset, North Yorkshire, Northumberland, Oxfordshire, Plymouth, Reading, Richmond upon Thames, Rochdale, Salford, Sandwell, Sheffield, Shropshire, Solihull, Somerset, Stockport, Stoke on Trent, Suffolk, Tees Valley, Warrington and Wiltshire.

- Alternative provision free schools – Warwickshire and Worcestershire
- The 39 new free schools follow an applications round in July 2018, where councils set out their case for why a new special or AP free school would benefit pupils in their area.
- Once all the schools are open, they will offer an extra 3,469 extra places for pupils, extending the support given to SEND pupils as well as those not in mainstream education.
- The commitment to 39 new free schools comes after the Department for Education announced an additional £250 million for the high needs budget and an extra £100 million investment to create more specialist places in mainstream schools, colleges and special schools in December.

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## **Press release: Change of British High Commissioner to Bangladesh – March 2019**

2018 to present FC0, Additional Director, Western Balkans Programme 2017 to 2018 Cabinet Office, Director Secretariat and Implementation, National Security Secretariat 2015 to 2017 Cabinet Office, Director Foreign Policy, National Security Secretariat 2013 to 2015 Kabul, Deputy Head of Mission then Chargé d’Affaires 2010 to 2013 Chicago, Her Majesty’s Consul General 2007 to 2010 FC0, Joint Head, Counter Terrorism Department 2004 to 2007 Skopje, Her Majesty’s Ambassador 2003 to 2004 FC0, Travel Advice Policy Review Lead, Consular Directorate 2003 FC0, Deputy Head, Security and Operations, Iraq Policy Unit 2000 to 2003 FC0, Head, NATO Section, Security Policy Department 1998 to 2000 Washington, Private Secretary to HM Ambassador 1997 to 1998 Washington, Press Officer 1995 to 1996 FC0, Head, Peacekeeping Section, UN Department 1991 to 1994 Manila, Political and Press Officer 1990 to 1991 FC0, Desk Officer, Nuclear Section, Security Policy Department

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## **Speech: Education Secretary speaks to Leaders of diversity network**

We often talk about diversity as a matter of fairness and non-discrimination,

including to individuals. And that is indeed extremely important – a matter of equity and justice. And we believe it is, simply, right that we should reflect the make-up of our communities.

But for organisations, there is also intrinsic value in diversity of your workforce – including age, gender, disability, sexuality and ethnicity. If we look at three aspects: – Broaden the talent pool – Reflect and understand the customer base – Different perspectives and problem-solving These all support productivity.

Now, a lot of people do recognise that, but even in organisations where it is widely recognised, that doesn't mean diversity will come about automatically.

It can be impeded by the way we do things, how we present to the outside world, and by the, I think, pretty widespread human tendency to hide in our own image.

I'm sure you've all heard of the Myers-Briggs test. In a consulting company all but two people were INTP on Myers-Briggs. This may be good for that type of work, but maybe not so good for challenging that type of work.

More and more companies are changing what they do: – Where and how they advertise – The application process, with a list of requirements and questions asked – Name blind recruitment – Competency-based interviews; and – Being clear upfront about the potential to build in flexibilities.

I am delighted to join you today for your discussions about diversity in school leadership. It's an issue I'm passionate about promoting.

As Education Secretary, I am committed to creating a culture where teachers love their jobs and where children do their best. And we all know the huge difference a great teacher can make to a child's life.

The problem the UK faces is that we need more of them. Although we have almost the highest number of teachers ever, with pupil numbers in secondary schools rising, the demand for them is outstripping supply.

And although the number of teachers and heads from minority ethnic backgrounds is certainly going up, this is from a low base – it is lower for example than the NHS and we need to see more of them being represented in school leadership.

The number of ethnic minority teachers in nursery and primary schools rose from 9% to 11%, and from 13% to 17% in secondary schools between 2010 and 2017. There's a corresponding rise too in the numbers of those in headteacher positions (up from 5% to 7% in primaries and 7% to 9% in secondaries). Welcome though those changes are, they still fall well short of the 19.5% that makes up the UK population and even further below the 32% of the school pupil population who come from ethnic minority groups.

We cannot begin to address teacher shortages if we are not recruiting from 100% of the best possible pool of applicants.

Last month I announced our new Recruitment and Retention Strategy. This has been a huge endeavour for my department. It aims to attract more people to the profession and make sure those who are already in it are happy and fulfilled and going to stay there.

I don't want, and could not afford, for people to think this isn't a viable prospect because of their background or ethnicity.

Let's say you're 14, you're not white and the school you go to has no black or minority teachers. What does that tell you? Or if you are the only teacher from an ethnic minority background in a school. How might that make you feel?

A study by Johns Hopkins University in the US has found that black students who had a teacher who "looks like them" were more likely to graduate from high school and go on to university than those who didn't.

While we cannot make direct comparisons between the UK and the US, we should take note.

My colleague Nadhim Zahawi hosted a roundtable last year on the different levels of achievement of ethnic groups in school.

The roundtable concluded that we need far more teachers from ethnic minorities in schools as role models for young students. Seeing teachers, and a headteacher in particular, who are from minorities can help motivate young people and encourage them to go for their goals.

It is a virtuous circle: more teachers from racial and ethnic minorities are positive role models, which in turn can drive academic achievement.

Last October we published a statement of intent, our commitment to increasing the diversity of the teaching workforce. We are pleased that groups from across the sector – unions like NAHT and ASCL and grassroots associations like BAMEed have already signed up to this and pledged the actions they will take to make it happen. Others are considering doing so, and I am pleased that Oasis will be the first Academies Trust to join.

We have reformed the suite of National Professional Qualifications (NPQs) to strengthen leadership in our schools. All providers of these gold-standard qualifications have to hit targets for recruitment of participants from ethnic minorities.

Over the past four years, the leadership equality and diversity fund has been supporting diversity projects at local level.

Last year we announced an additional investment of £2m in establishing new school-led equality and diversity hubs covering all of the eight regional schools commissioner regions and building on the success of the previous equality and diversity fund. Because you know, if it's DfE policy, it's got a hub.

These hubs are supporting teachers from diverse backgrounds, including those from ethnic minorities, to progress in their career and into leadership.

As we look for the best examples of what works in providing an education system that delivers for everyone, London often comes up.

While the improvement in London schools – it's called the London effect – is likely to be due to an interaction of many factors, including the workforce, individual school practices and improvement initiatives, the city's rich ethnic mix is pretty widely acknowledged to be a major aspect of its success.

But we should not leave it all to teachers or school administrators to do. Last year I urged more people to become school governors. If I had to make sure that this would be heard by one group above any other, it would be those from ethnic minorities.

Governors and trustees are absolutely crucial to the life and direction of a school; they decide how funding is spent, they support and challenge leaders, guide what children learn and the values they live by. It is vital that what they say and do reflects their communities.

According to a National Governance Association survey, only 5% of governors and trustees come from an ethnic minority.

Schools need diverse governing boards which is why we support the NGA's campaign Everyone on Board, a push to get far greater board diversity.

Ladies and gentlemen, Britain has been a rich, multi-ethnic melting pot for many years. In our schools we need to draw on the full range of talent, and to reflect children's communities. When we learn from each other we become stronger and better. Our future success depends on it.

Thank you.

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## **[Press release: UK aid pledges “vital lifeline” for Syrians](#)**

The UK will pledge a total of £400 million of life-saving aid to the 2019 Syria crisis response to help those who need it most, Minister for the Middle East, Alistair Burt, announced today.

The pledge, which includes an additional £100 million of UK aid, building on the £300 million previously allocated to the UK's response to the conflict in Syria, will be made at the at the 'Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region' Conference in Brussels this week (14 March 2019).

The pledge signals ongoing support from the UK for Syria's future, and will also help to limit the impacts of the ongoing conflict inside Syria, including the threat of extremist influences.

The UK has been at the forefront of the humanitarian response to the Syria crisis and continues to be one of the largest international donors, having now committed more than £2.8 billion since 2012. Across Syria and the region, we have provided over 27 million food rations, over 14 million medical consultations, and over 10 million vaccines since the conflict began.

Minister for the Middle East, Alistair Burt, said:

The humanitarian situation in Syria is still critical, with millions of people displaced across the region since the conflict began. Our pledge is a clear commitment that UK support to the Syrian people is steadfast.

Today's pledge of UK aid will provide a vital lifeline to those caught up in the conflict, delivering food and clean drinking water, medical care, vaccinations, and education for children.

We cannot treat instability in the Middle East as a distant problem. UK aid is helping keep both Syrian and British people safe from instability and extremism.

The UK's pledge for the Syria Crisis will support Syrians inside Syria and neighbouring countries, including Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. Our support will:

- help vulnerable Syrians access clean drinking water;
- deliver food, clothing, tents, hygiene kits and other essential survival items to those in need;
- provide access to medical care, including vaccinations against deadly diseases and counselling for those traumatised by the conflict; and
- help Syrian refugees find jobs and access education.

Today's pledge will support further efforts by the UK government to help build greater stability across the region, including the bold new approach to UK aid in Jordan launched last month. The Jordan: Growth and Opportunity conference in London saw the UK convene global leaders behind Jordan's plans for economic growth and reform.

Humanitarian access to millions in need within Syria continues to be obstructed by the Syrian regime, who routinely refuse requests from the UN and aid organisations to deliver aid, prolonging suffering. The UK will continue to do all it can to support humanitarian agencies to deliver the assistance required.

The conflict in Syria poses serious risks to UK interests, including the stability of the wider region, migration, and counter-terrorism. The UK government will continue to push for a negotiated political settlement to bring the people of Syria back together.

Notes to editors



- The EU and UN will host the “Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region” conference in Brussels between the 12 and 14 March 2019.
- Today’s £400 million pledge for 2019 brings the total support to Syria and the region to £2.8 billion since 2012. Today’s pledge includes an additional £100 million of UK aid, building on the £300 million previously allocated to spend in the Syria region in 2019.
- The pledge will also support the Shared UK Government Approach to Gender in Syria (Shared Approach), launched in March 2018. This commits the UK government to use UK programming and advocacy to contribute towards positive change for women and girls in Syria, by implementing minimum gender standards.