

Drive for stronger school system to benefit all pupils

An education at a Good or Outstanding school that is part of a strong multi-academy trust has today (28 April) been hailed by the Education Secretary as a key part in building back better from the pandemic.

In his speech to the Confederation of School Trusts annual conference, Gavin Williamson said the government's vision is for the school system to continue to move decisively towards a single model built on strong multi-academy trusts as its foundation, bringing the current pick-and-mix system of local authority maintained and standalone academy schools to an end.

All schools have gone above and beyond through the pandemic, with all teachers and staff playing a vital role in the country's frontline response. But the pandemic has brought to the fore the benefits of strong multi-academy trusts in providing outstanding support for both children and staff, through their collaborative approach and being able to pool resources and knowledge.

The Education Secretary also stated his ambition to bring schools with a history of long-term underperformance, which have had three consecutive Requires Improvement or worse judgements by Ofsted, into strong multi-academy trusts. He committed to consult fully with the sector on any such changes.

All schools will now have the option to 'try the academy experience before they buy' – associating with multi-academy trusts for a defined period to experience the benefits for themselves and their students, with no commitment.

A new National Behaviour Survey will also be launched to give parents a termly snapshot of the state of behaviour in schools, including disruptive behaviour and bullying. It will not be an accountability tool, but will provide parents and stakeholders the data they need to build a picture of behaviour in schools over time and improve the government's ability to support schools with any challenges they are facing.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

I know from my own experience, that when parents set out to choose a school for their child, they want something very simple – a Good or Outstanding school with excellent teaching, in a wider school environment that supports their child to fulfil their potential.

And this is exactly what parents can expect when their child's school is part of a strong multi-academy trust. The vast majority of Requires Improvement or Inadequate schools that become an academy and join a trust go on to be rated at least Good the next time they are inspected.

That is why I am determined to finish what we started and end the pick-and-mix approach to school types, building back fairer from the pandemic to make sure every parent has the certainty that their child is at a school that is backed by a strong trust.

This is one of the most important things I can do to make sure every child has the opportunity to catch up on any education, development or emotional support they may have missed during the pandemic.

The new National Behaviour Survey builds on the £10 million Behaviour Hubs programme, matching the best multi-academy trust leaders and academy heads with partner schools and trusts to help embed outstanding behaviour policies that support children to thrive.

Further new interventions to encourage and support schools to join a strong multi-academy trust include:

- An expanded £24 million fund due to launch in May to develop more, and grow existing strong multi-academy trusts, providing more capacity for trusts to take on and support schools converting into academies
- [Updated guidance for trusts](#) and prospective academy converters, published today, which sets out how strong trusts improve educational outcomes, how local authority schools can convert and the support they can expect to receive
- A pilot programme, in partnership with the Church of England and Catholic Church, to set up new faith academy trusts, as well as a new turnaround trust to support Catholic schools in need of intensive support
- An [updated trust and school improvement](#) offer, providing underperforming schools with leadership support to help drive progress

STEP Academy Trust, based in the South East, is amongst those already allowing prospective partner schools to 'try before they buy'.

Leora Cruddas, chief executive of the Confederation of School Trusts said:

There is power in a group of schools working together in a single accountability structure. Multi-academy Trusts are education charities that run schools to give children a better future. They are a new civic structure created with the sole purpose of advancing education for public benefit.

A group of schools working together in a single entity can do lots

of things that are harder for stand-alone schools to do. Teachers work and learn together to improve the way they teach and schools can share practices that make a difference to the quality of teaching. In the collaborative structure of a School Trust, it is more possible for teachers and leaders to move to another school to help improve the quality of education where that school is struggling – and these moves are more likely to be to schools with more disadvantaged pupils.

Mark Ducker OBE, CEO of STEP Academy Trust said:

Working within a time-limited partnership arrangement gives both parties an opportunity to explore whether there is true alignment in their mission, vision and values before making a long-term commitment.

For STEP, this has been the main benefit of such arrangements and it is why we favour this approach. It is our experience that, through the process, a genuine consensus emerges in how partners need to work moving forward if they are to become more than the sum of their individual parts.

The government is due to set out further interventions in the coming weeks to make sure every child has the support they need to catch up on any learning missed during the pandemic and recover from any wider impact the pandemic may have had.

Hamid Patel CBE, CEO of Star Academies, said:

The pandemic has shown us that strength and resilience are gained through collective effort and collaboration. Strong values-driven trusts with children at their hearts have the capacity to recover and to engineer their own futures in a way that standalone schools cannot. They have huge potential to transform pupils' lives and those of the communities they serve.

Lorrayne Hughes, CEO of Cumbria Education Trust, said:

The true power of academies comes through their being in a single entity with other schools – the academy trust. Strong school trusts allow deep collaboration between staff, and the freedom for leaders to lead and teachers to teach, therefore creating the best conditions for a first-class education to be provided to children and young people.

Jo Coton, CEO of NET Academies Trust, which runs six primary academies in

Essex and Waltham Forest, said:

I have long believed in the merits of academy trusts – groups of schools working together allow for the best sharing of good practice between colleagues and for excellent professional development opportunities. Together these drive great teaching, in turn delivering the best education for children. The trust model maintains excellence in good schools and is the best way to rapidly improve weaker ones.

Covid-19 has shown the importance of being in a strong trust. The last 14 months have created unprecedented demands on all schools but our strong trust's structure has allowed us to withstand these pressures, still deliver the best outcomes for our pupils, staff and parents, and mitigate the educational, social and health impacts.

ENDS

[Education Secretary speech to the Confederation of School Trusts](#)

Hello. I am delighted to be speaking to you today. The coronavirus pandemic has been keeping people apart for more than a year. In that time, our education communities have been tackling the enormous challenges this has meant for schools. So before I go any further, I want to congratulate you for your leadership and resilience.

But slowly, we are inching our way back to normality. And I am delighted that I can speak to you today because I have been impatient for some time now to share an ambitious vision for our country's schools.

Today over 50 per cent of pupils in state-funded education study in academies. But we want to go further because strong multi academy trusts are the best structure to enable schools and teachers to deliver consistently good outcomes for all their pupils.

The government's vision is for every school to be part of a family of schools in a strong multi academy trust.

For me, it is not about ideology, nor am I proposing structural change just for the sake of it – our ambition is for more schools to benefit from being part of a strong family because multi-academy trusts are the best way to advance education for the public benefit and can deliver clear benefits for

teaching and pupil outcomes.

The difference with the multi academy trust model, and we see it again and again, is that the strongest leaders can take responsibility for supporting more schools, developing great teachers, and allowing schools to focus on what really matters – teaching, learning and a curriculum that is based on what works.

We have seen throughout the pandemic how schools have kept children learning, either in person or remotely.

But what we have seen from strong multi academy trusts is their ability to respond quickly, to direct resources to the schools that need them, supporting teachers to concentrate on frontline teaching.

Many have gone even further, helping schools outside their own academy trust so that other pupils in the wider community can benefit.

Standards in certain areas of the country have been too low for too long we need our best leaders and trusts to drive change and level up opportunity.

Today we have published guidance for trusts and prospective converters, outlining how even more schools can join a strong family to turn that 50 per cent of pupils studying in academies into 100 per cent.

During the summer term – we will be undertaking research and speaking to school leaders, taking on board what they tell us as we seek to make the process of joining a multi academy trust as easy as possible.

I'm not saying that every academy is a world-beater. The performance of academies varies, like that of all schools. But through the support of strong multi academy trusts, we have seen many previously underperforming local authority-run schools transformed after becoming sponsored academies.

As of August 2020, 75 per cent of sponsored primary and secondary academies that have been inspected are 'Good' or 'Outstanding' compared to only around 1 in 10 of their predecessor schools.

So how do they do it? How do our strongest multi academy trusts enable improvements in pupil performance that is both sustainable and long-lasting?

I know from conversations with many of you that multi academy trusts very often share certain characteristics: many will have, for instance, leaders who know the value of working together for the greater good, as well as strong and effective governance; they will no doubt have a knowledge-rich curriculum; they will have a culture where good behaviour is the norm.

Trusts are also enabling teachers to develop and deliver their best teaching using the latest research and evidence. They are supporting teachers throughout their career journey – from preparations to deliver the Early Career Framework reforms, to longer-term career routes that allow teachers to move around schools and develop their expertise where it is needed most.

One powerful example is the Durrington Academy Trust in West Sussex, which has identified six key principles for teaching that they know work and embedded these in everything they do, enabling all staff to focus on great teaching, day after day. It's simple but incredibly effective. In other words, it works.

We're investing in strong multi academy trusts like this, so they can support even more schools.

The short film this morning illustrated some of the excellent work undertaken by Dixons. They are a trust based in Bradford and Leeds, achieving some of the best outcomes for pupils in the country. Their soon to be established hub in Liverpool, has already provided vulnerable maintained schools with support during the pandemic.

In the coming years we hope that Dixon's Liverpool hub will introduce its Teaching Institute, and will carry on offering continued professional development to teacher trainees, newly qualified teachers and those teachers who want to one day lead their own schools.

This is what I mean when I say strong trusts exist to advance education for the public benefit, they focus on what they know will improve outcomes for pupils and think beyond their own schools. And when pupils benefit, we all benefit.

Strong multi academy trusts also gain from the greater efficiencies which linking together makes possible; they are able to use evidence of what works to guide curriculum models and develop resources that help reduce teacher workload.

Their single governance structure makes all of this possible and is a more effective model than other examples of collaboration, such as federations and alliances.

I'd like to be absolutely clear here. Improving outcomes for pupils is our number one priority and the one thing that everything else hinges on. As we build back better from Covid, that is more critical than ever before.

Already we know that many pupils have lost ground because of the disruption caused by the pandemic. For those who are in schools that are struggling, this will mean catching up will be even more of a challenge.

I am not prepared to let children miss out in this way and I know that you aren't either.

I want to see us break away from our current pick-and-mix structure of the school system and move towards a single model. One that is built on a foundation of strong multi academy trusts. And I am actively looking at how we can make that happen.

Education recovery will involve a wide package of support, and I have asked Sir Kevan Collins to take the lead in advising on how we can do this most effectively. We are determined that we build resilience throughout the sector

so that no school is left isolated and that we have the right system in place for all schools to recover.

The benefits of multi academy trusts were already clear but have become more apparent during this pandemic. Take Bishop Hogarth multi academy trust, with schools located in County Durham, Darlington, Hartlepool and Stockton. Not only did it provide high-quality remote learning and strong support to vulnerable pupils but the school also helped create PPE for the local NHS workers and care homes.

This shows how the model can be a catalyst in every community. It is no longer viable for schools to be single entities – the pandemic has shown us that a school that stands alone is very often a weaker school. What is needed is the safety net of a strong family and the best family is an academy trust.

This is such a critical mission for our children not just today, but in the years to come, that I am not prepared to leave it to chance.

I can today announce a number of new measures to support schools to become part of that vision, giving them the chance to benefit from being part of a strong family of schools.

As I have already mentioned, we are today publishing our updated good practice guidance which sets out how strong trusts improve educational outcomes. This sets out expectations of strong trusts, how a school can join one, and the support they can expect to receive.

I am committed to see a system that brings the greatest benefits to the greatest numbers and to do this we need a clear regulatory framework that can support strong trusts. We also need to be able to address issues in the small number of cases where they arise.

Providing clear guidance for trusts will support our vision for strong families of schools led by strong and effective governance and this year the Academies Financial Handbook will be updated to bring greater clarity to our guidance.

As I said earlier, the golden thread running through academisation is that we must constantly advance education, improving outcomes for children and levelling up communities. As Leora said earlier this morning, multi academy trusts are the best structure for improvement, and we want a system that's the best at getting better.

Through the next phase of the Trust Capacity Fund, we will release up to £24m over the 2021-22 financial year to help trusts to grow. We especially want to support strong trusts, and strong schools forming trusts, so that they are better able to take on underperforming schools in areas of high need.

While there are many strong Church of England and Catholic academy trusts, as a group, they have a smaller proportion of academies compared to non-church schools.

The department is therefore launching a pilot programme, in partnership with

the Church of England and the Catholic Church, to set up new Church academy trusts.

We are also working with the Catholic Education Service and their Dioceses to establish a new turnaround trust to specifically support Catholic schools in need of intensive support whilst dioceses increase their own trust capacity right across the country.

We are also developing an idea that originated with some of our leading trusts, which makes it easier for maintained and stand-alone schools to explore the benefits of joining a strong trust.

Schools can 'try before they buy' and see for themselves first-hand what being part of a strong trust involves.

We are setting up a process for them to temporarily partner with a strong trust, to experience the benefits that being part of a trust would offer them, their pupils, and their wider school communities.

I see no reason why every local authority-maintained school in the country shouldn't consider taking up this opportunity as soon as possible, to put them in the best position to decide whether joining a specific trust is right for them.

One example of a multi-academy trust already allowing schools to 'try before they buy' is STEP – located in South London and East Sussex.

We will continue to offer school improvement support from selected system leaders who are able to help guide vulnerable schools. Many are drawn from academy trusts that already have an excellent reputation. From September, where those schools are already part of trusts, we will also provide funding to support selected leaders in these schools and trusts so that they can gain professional qualifications in executive leadership.

We also have a pool of experts in governance who will be able to advise and strengthen the trust's oversight of school performance. For maintained schools, we will offer funding to help set up a trust partnership. These reforms aim to not only improve schools, but to provide world-class leadership development, and together will ensure the greatest scope for school improvement over the long term.

I am clear that we need to improve schools with a history of long-term underperformance. These are the schools which have been judged requires improvement or worse by Ofsted in their last three consecutive full inspections.

I want to bring these schools into strong multi-academy trusts, and I hope to be able to share more details in due course. I will of course consult fully with the sector before making these changes.

One of the things that we see over and over again in high-performing multi academy trusts is a consistent mindset of excellence.

Excellence has many faces and not all of them are academic. Our best schools share a tireless focus on good behaviour and discipline.

Disorderly classrooms don't just have a significant impact on children's ability to learn. They can equally have an effect on a child's mental health and wellbeing. This has always been the case. It is not a Covid byproduct. Every classroom and every playground should be a wholesome and carefree environment where every child can develop and learn and play. No parent wants to send their child to a school where bullying is rife.

So it is vital we have calm and orderly schools where pupils are able to study and learn without interference from others and where, critically of course – teachers can teach. I know that so many of the Trusts represented here today already have strong and effective behaviour policies and, just like a strong curriculum or inspiring teaching, I want this to be the case in every school in the country.

One thing I am absolutely convinced about is that every school should be mobile-free. Mobile phones are not just distracting, but when misused or overused, they can have a damaging effect on a pupil's mental health and well-being. This is not acceptable. I therefore fully support head teachers who ban mobile phones from the school day.

We are going to be consulting on how we can help more heads remove phones from the school day, alongside other revisions to the behaviour and discipline and expulsions guidance, later on in the year.

I have just announced the first 22 of our planned behaviour hubs. These are schools and multi academy trusts which already have a record of maintaining orderly and well-disciplined classrooms. They will be sharing their expertise and advising other schools how to address some of the common problems which all schools face at some point.

The first schools have now been matched up and training has begun. Applications for the next cohort of schools have opened, and will begin receiving support in September.

I also intend to go further and I am committed to focusing on reforms needed to deliver far better outcomes for children and young people in Alternative Provision who are most at risk of expulsion and disengaging from education. As the majority of these pupils have special educational needs, we are working with key stakeholders and will set out plans in the forthcoming special educational needs review.

We know that as well as the most severe forms of misbehaviour, such as bullying and sexual abuse, there is a persistent problem of low-level disruption in too many schools. This damages learning and is a major cause of teachers leaving the profession. The report, 'It Just Grinds You Down', by Policy Exchange, found that 75% of teachers think that low level disruption occurs frequently or very frequently in their schools and that 72% of them know a colleague who has left the teaching profession because of bad behaviour.

The department's own School Snapshot Survey two years ago also found that two-thirds of teachers who responded felt dealing with misbehaviour had a negative impact on their own wellbeing.

I can announce today that we will be launching a new national Behaviour Survey to give a regular snapshot of the state of behaviour in our schools.

The National Behaviour Survey will run once a term from next academic year, and will give an accurate picture on how good school behaviour is – and whether it is getting better or worse.

I want to make absolutely clear that this will not provide school-level data, or be used as a school performance measure. Instead, it's going to allow us to build up a national picture of behaviour in schools over time and act as a signpost to what schools need. The survey will cover low level disruption, bullying and other incidents of challenging behaviour.

We will be commissioning the National Behaviour Survey shortly, in order to begin running in the next academic year.

All these reforms sit alongside the improvements we have made to teacher training as part of the Early Career Framework, so that all new teachers will be shown how to effectively manage behaviour in their first two years in the profession from September 2021.

The Early Career Framework will directly support those at the start of their teaching careers by ensuring new teachers are entitled to a structured two-year package of funded high quality professional development based on the best available evidence. Once fully rolled out, it will be backed by at least £130million a year in extra funding. Trust leaders have worked on the design of this framework and we expect that they will be able to be key deliverers of this programme.

The pandemic has taught us many things, but one of the single most valuable lessons we have learned is the importance of reaching out so that schools can work together and become stronger together, enabling every child to have the chance of a better future.

Leora spoke so eloquently about horizons that have no limits and this is something we see again and again in your schools – your horizons have no limits.

This is what I want for every school and every child.

I said earlier that our ambition is for all schools to be in a strong family of schools. I also said that this is not about ideology but this is about an ideal. That ideal drives everything I do as Education Secretary. Every single child should have the very best start in life we can give them and I am going to carry on pursuing this until it is no longer an ideal but it is a reality.

Thank you.

Specialised Committee on Citizens' Rights: joint statement, 28 April 2021

News story

This joint statement follows the meeting of the Specialised Committee on Citizens' Rights between the European Commission and UK government by video conference.



A joint statement by the Specialised Committee on Citizens' Rights between the European Commission and UK government, 28 April 2021:

The sixth meeting of the Specialised Committee on Citizens' Rights was held today, co-chaired by officials from the UK Government and the European Commission. A number of representatives from EU Member States were also in attendance. The Committee has been established by the Withdrawal Agreement to monitor the implementation and application of the Citizens' Rights part of the Withdrawal Agreement, which protects the rights of UK nationals in the EU and EU citizens in the UK and their family members.

The UK and the EU exchanged updates on implementation and application since the last meeting. This included residence systems, frontier worker systems and mutual recognition of professional qualifications. The UK and the EU highlighted the need to implement the Withdrawal Agreement correctly for the benefit of EU citizens and UK nationals, and reaffirmed their commitment to address issues where both Parties do not share the same interpretation.

During the meeting, issues relating to those who have been prevented from accessing benefits and services, such as healthcare, the verification of beneficiary status under the Withdrawal Agreement and the loss of rights for those with a non-permanent

residence status who do not apply for permanent residence before their original status expires were raised.

A third Joint Report on Residence was also presented. Specific attention was given to countries with a constitutive system, in light of the approaching deadline for applications and handling of applications submitted after the deadline. The UK and the EU recalled that EU citizens in the UK and UK nationals in France, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta and the Netherlands need to apply for a new residence status by 30 June 2021 in order to be protected by the Withdrawal Agreement.

The UK and the EU also emphasised the importance of providing clear communications and comprehensive support to vulnerable or hard to reach citizens. Public and non-public bodies must also work to ensure that beneficiaries of the Withdrawal Agreement are able to enjoy their rights and entitlements, particularly when accessing benefits and services and exercising their right to work, rent and study.

The UK and the EU have agreed to meet again in June to produce a fourth Joint Report on Residence and maintain a close dialogue on implementation and application. The UK and the EU reiterated their commitment in ensuring the correct implementation and application of the Citizens' Rights part of the Withdrawal Agreement and stressed the importance of upholding citizens' rights.

Published 28 April 2021

[UK donates medical supplies to PNG](#)

World news story

The United Kingdom has provided K2 million worth of vital medical equipment to help Papua New Guinea tackle the recent surge in COVID-19 cases.



Anna Maalsen, WHO Representative, Hon Jelta Wong MP, Minister for Health, and Keith Scott, British High Commissioner to Papua New Guinea at the handover of UK funded medical equipment.

The equipment, procured by the World Health Organization in PNG and aimed at breathing and respiratory needs, includes a portable x-ray machine, patient monitors, resuscitation sets, ventilation bags and oxygen masks.

It is the latest in a programme of UK support to the health sector in Papua New Guinea, which also aims to build capacity and provide lasting value for future generations.

Keith Scott, British High Commissioner to Papua New Guinea, said:

I am delighted that UK funding has enabled the delivery of much needed health equipment, which will not only help during the current spread of COVID-19 but will also benefit patients in Papua New Guinea well into the future.

It complements the work we have already been doing to promote health in PNG, including our K40 million Fleming Fund programme to tackle drug resistant diseases and our K1 million donation to UNICEF to provide clean water and washing facilities for 8,000 school children in the Highlands.

The United Kingdom has committed K6 billion to the international response to tackle COVID-19 health, economic and humanitarian impacts and has given K2.6 billion to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment to provide access to COVID-19 vaccines worldwide, including the first batch of 132,000 AstraZeneca doses, which arrived in PNG on 13 April.

Other UK support has included:

- K155,000 to up-grade facilities at St John Ambulance Headquarters in Port Moresby and provide equipment for Rita Flynn COVID isolation facility
- K110,000 for 35,000 COVID awareness booklets in Tok Pisin, Motu and Bahasa, distributed to all MPs

Exchange of letters between the Prime Minister and the Independent Adviser on Ministers' Interests

We use some essential cookies to make this website work.

We'd like to set additional cookies to understand how you use GOV.UK, remember your settings and improve government services.

We also use cookies set by other sites to help us deliver content from their services.