

Education White Paper - Initial Summary

The White Paper covers teaching and leadership in schools, (Chapters 2 and 3), preventing and tackling underperformance in academies (Chapter 5), curriculum reform (Chapter 6), governance and standards (Chapter 7), and fair funding for schools (Chapter 8), which is the subject of a separate consultation.

Every school to become an academy by 2022

Most schools will be expected to form or join multi-academy trusts (MATs): "Apart from in exceptional circumstances, the smallest schools will have to form or join a MAT." Other successful, sustainable schools will still be able to: "continue as single academy trusts if they choose to do so."

The government will create new powers to direct schools to become academies in local authority areas which are underperforming or where the local authority no longer has capacity to maintain its schools or where schools have not started the process of becoming an academy by 2020.

In order to speed up the process of and reduce the barriers to conversion to academy status for all schools the government will seek to agree a new MoU with the Church of England and the Catholic Education Service which will include clear protocols for agreeing the requirements when Church schools become academies.

Schools will continue to get financial support to become academies.

To ensure land issues do not get in the way of improving schools, "when a local authority's community schools convert to academy status, land held by the authority for those schools will transfer to the Secretary of State, who will then grant a lease to the academy trust." Where a school converts to academy status, the government will not take ownership of any land owned either by schools themselves or any charitable trust. However, the ability for maintained schools to convert to foundation status will be removed.

The government will establish a MAT support fund to enable groups of schools to join together.

Free schools and UTCs

500 free schools and UTCs will be opened by 2020. The government hopes to see "a UTC within reach of every city."

To ensure sufficient new schools can be established where they are needed the government will continue to work with local authorities and other public sector bodies to secure sites for new free schools and introduce new measures that will enable the Secretary of State to require the use of local authority land for new free schools.

Parents and pupils

The government plans to launch a new portal for parents in 2017 to help them understand and navigate the schools system. This will work alongside a new performance tables website which will launch in March 2016.

If parents and pupils feel their voices aren't being heard, they need clear and appropriate channels for complaints. The government will make it simpler for parents to escalate complaints to the DfE. Consideration will also be given as to how parents might be able to petition RSCs for their child's

school to move to a different MAT where there is underperformance or other exceptional circumstances.

Local authorities

In the short term local authorities will continue to have responsibilities which include: employment of staff in community schools; ownership and asset management of school buildings etc. These responsibilities will shrink as each school in their area becomes an academy; when every school in their area has done so, they will fade away.

In the future local authority education duties will focus on three main areas:

1. Ensuring every child has a school place including that there are sufficient school, special school and AP places to meet local demand. Local authorities will also work with schools and parents in developing local school transport policies, giving schools the opportunity to provide these services where it makes sense locally.
2. Ensuring the needs of vulnerable learners are met by identifying and making provision for children with SEND or with looked after status. Local authorities will also promote school attendance, tackle persistent absences and lead on safeguarding responsibilities for all children excluded or otherwise unable to attend mainstream school e.g. Those educated at home.
3. Act as champions for all parents families by supporting them to navigate the system through a continued role in admissions, for example.

In light of the policy changes set out in the white paper the government intends to review the responsibilities of local authorities in relation to children, including the implications for the roles of the director of children's services and the lead member for children.

The government is considering extending legislation to extend the role and responsibilities of virtual school heads so that they can continue to support children who have left care under an adoption order.

The government will seek views on a number of changes to the school admissions system to make it simpler and clearer, including "requiring local authorities to coordinate in-year admissions and handle the administration of the independent admission appeals function".

Academy trusts will no longer be required to reserve places for elected parents on governing boards.

A self-improving system

From September 2017, school improvement funding will increasingly be routed through Teaching Schools. The government will ensure all schools in all areas can access support, collaboration and best practice by ensuring full coverage of system leaders across the country with up to 300 more Teaching Schools and 800 more NLEs targeted where most needed.

An innovation fund for RSCs to commission school improvement support from within the system for failing and coasting schools will be established.

The government will engage MATs, sponsors, academies, diocese and the wider schools sector to ensure that the legal framework for academies is fit for purpose in the long term.

"In the rare scenario that a trust stops operating an academy at short notice (and there is no immediate alternative provider) the Secretary of State will be responsible for the running of the school.

To retain the expertise in the system and ensure that children still benefit from the best talent in local authorities, the government expects some individuals working in local authority teams will leave to set up new trusts or join existing ones and become academy sponsors.

Mainstream schools will support AP providers to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum and high quality teaching by sharing subject specialists and facilities that smaller APs would otherwise find hard to access. Schools will be responsible for the budgets from which AP is funded. As they will also be responsible for commissioning and accountable for education outcomes, they will have stronger incentives to take preventative approaches and achieve value for money.

The government will consider how parents may be able to petition Regional Schools Commissioners for their school to move to a different MAT "where there is underperformance or other exceptional circumstances".

To launch new accountability measures for MATs, publishing MAT performance tables in addition to the continued publication of, and focus on, inspection and performance data at individual school level.

Inspection

The government will work with Ofsted to ensure the inspection regime is fair, increasingly proportionate and focussed on underperformance. Outstanding schools are already exempt from routine inspection.

To introduce an "improvement period" of 30 months, during this time schools won't be inspected in order to allow leaders to put in train sustainable improvement.

Teaching and curriculum

The government plans to replace the current Qualified Teacher Status with a stronger, more challenging accreditation based on a teacher's effectiveness in the classroom, as judged by great schools.

To reform the National College for Teaching and Leadership "ensuring that in addition to delivering our leadership remit, we are better able to design and deliver well-targeted incentives, teacher recruitment campaigns and opportunities that attract sufficient, high-quality new entrants to the profession."

The government will establish a College of Teaching, this will be a professional body like those in other high status professions such as law and medicine. It will be a voluntary membership organisation, run by teachers, for teachers. The government will also support the establishment of a new, peer reviewed British Education Journal by the College of Teaching, to help spread cutting edge national and international research.

The government will continue to equip schools to embed a knowledge-based curriculum as the cornerstone of an excellent, academically rigorous education to age 16. The national curriculum will no longer be a decree, but a benchmark.

The government will work with a group of leading headteachers and practitioners to produce an action plan for improving PHSE provision.

Governance

The government plans to establish a database of everyone involved in governance, they intend to legislate so that “unsuitable individuals” can be barred from being governors of maintained schools.

The government will work with schools and MATs to develop a competency framework defining core skills and knowledge needed for governance in different contexts.

The government will create stronger expectations on governing bodies to fill skills gaps, including through training, with help to recruit skilled people. The government will also develop a new competency framework or governance in different contexts.