HM Government

Department for Education and Skills: Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners

Putting people at the heart of public services

department for
education and skills
creating opportunity, releasing potential, achieving excellence

31. We do not expect schools and teachers to make these extended offers alone. The Children's Trust will help to bring together schools with voluntary and community sector providers who can help; and broker imaginative solutions that do not involve extra work for teachers. As with the childcare guarantee, parents might be asked to contribute towards the cost of some extended services, but not for things – such as study support, clubs and societies – that are currently free.

Healthy and sustainable schools, serving the needs of the whole child

32. Every school – not just extended schools – should do their utmost to serve the needs of the whole child. In particular, our aim is that every school should be a healthy school, giving good teaching and advice about nutrition and exercise backed up by its school lunches, by its PE and school sport, and by its playground activities. Through this work, we will tackle levels of obesity in children, aiming to halt the growth in obesity among under-11s by 2010.

The National Healthy School Standard

The National Healthy School Standard is jointly funded by the Department for Education and Skills and the Department of Health. It is part of the government's drive to reduce health inequalities, promote social inclusion and raise educational standards.

How does it work?

Local healthy schools programmes, which are managed by local education and health partnerships, provide support to schools to help them become healthy and effective, supported by funding from Government

The National Healthy School Standard Guidance provides national quality standards for local healthy schools programmes. The standards were developed through a process of consultation (with practitioners and policy makers) and research. The guidance sets out criteria for assessing school achievements in relation to the following key themes:

- *Personal, social and health education*
- *Citizenship*
- *Drug Education (including alcohol and tobacco)*
- *Emotional Health and Wellbeing*
- *Healthy Eating*
- *Physical Activity*
- *Safety*
- *Sex and Relationship Education.*

33. Every school should also be an environmentally sustainable school, with a good plan for school transport that encourages walking and cycling, an active and effective recycling policy (moving from paper to electronic processes wherever possible) and a school garden or other opportunities for children to explore the natural world. Schools must teach our children by example as well as by instruction.

Changing the system to underpin our offer

34. We propose to change our system to free schools to teach and to improve. We intend to strip out unnecessary bureaucracy, give teachers and headteachers more confidence, and treat different schools differently – continuing to challenge the ones that are underperforming sharply, but being less directive with those that perform well, and moving towards more lateral support for them. This accords exactly with our principles for reform across the system as a whole.

More freedom from bureaucracy

35. We are developing and piloting a programme for improving the way we and Local Authorities work with primary schools. We believe Local Authorities will continue to have a strong role in supporting primary education, but that their support needs to be offered differently. Our reform programme – 'New Relationships with Primary Schools' – will mean fewer data requests, simpler communications, shorter, sharper inspections, a new school profile and a single point of contact for the school – a 'school improvement partner', working through the Local Authority.

Recognising the differences between schools

36. We will work through these primary school improvement partners to challenge and support all schools appropriately, using school self-evaluation and a single school plan to design the support they need in partnership with them. Stronger schools will be given a freer hand in the relationship than weaker ones.

- *For schools that perform well, the focus will increasingly be on them supporting and learning from each other, with more freedom and less top-down direction;*

- *For the weakest schools, there will be a tough programme of intensive support which gives firm direction for rapid improvement, with a series of 'non-negotiable' elements.*

37. Where schools do not respond and are not improving, they will be closed or merged with other schools. We will be intolerant of poor performance and we will make sure that as primary rolls fall over the next few years we offer firm advice to Local Authorities about taking the opportunity to close schools that are not performing well.

38. We are determined that all primary schools will be good schools; and we have set ourselves a target that the proportion of schools in which fewer that 65 percent of children reach the expected level in English and maths will have reduced by 40 percent by 2008 – a dramatic reduction in the number of schools not serving children well enough.

Three-year budgets for more autonomy

39. As we set out in detail in the next chapter, we will introduce a dedicated Schools Budget, with guaranteed national funding delivered via local authorities. All schools will receive guaranteed three-year budgets, driven by pupil numbers and needs, which will give primary as well as secondary schools an unprecedented amount of control and certainty, and much more scope to plan and shape their future direction.

40. We will also continue to support new capital investment for primary schools. Within local authorities' devolved and other allocations, we expect to see investment in primary schools increase by 25 percent by 2005-06, bringing estimated spending on the primary sector to around £1.6 billion.

Building workforce capacity

41. We will put more of a focus on teacher development by linking career progression to high-quality professional development, which will increasingly be school-based, with the best teachers coaching and mentoring others (as described in Chapter 5).

42. We will also help schools make more and better use of a more diverse and flexible workforce. The role of teaching assistants is vital in supporting children's individual needs, in helping teachers use and interpret data, in managing behaviour, and in giving teachers time to plan and prepare lessons. The reshaping of the workforce in schools also means there are more and better career pathways for those who begin working with children and decide they would like to become teaching assistants, and then teachers.

43. By September 2005, every primary teacher will be able to spend 10 percent of their time planning and preparing lessons and assessing work, because of the reforms of the school

workforce announced in January 2003. As we offer schools advice on how to move towards giving every teacher this time, we will build in a wide range of suggestions and models that look at ways of using this as an opportunity to bring more skilled adults into school to share their expertise and give children a broader and more rounded primary experience. Not all of these people will be qualified teachers (for example, they might be sports coaches, languages assistants, or chefs who help with teaching cookery) – the focus will be on the skills they have to offer that will add something distinctive to children's learning.

Building capacity by supporting primary leadership

44. If they are to take on the challenges we have set out in this Chapter, we will need the best generation of primary headteachers ever. We know that many primary headteachers are outstanding; and we want to use them to support their colleagues to help improve their schools. This year was the first full year of the Primary Leadership Programme – the largest programme of its kind in the world, and one of the most ambitious.

45. It is leading the way in improving the quality and consistency of education provided in primary schools. Primary Strategy Consultant Leaders, who are successful headteachers with a proven track record in delivering high standards in their own schools, provide support and challenge to other schools to help them improve.

46. In 2003-04, Local Authorities recruited just over 1,000 Consultant Leaders, and 3,500 partner schools took part in the programme. For 2004-05, there are 1,760 Consultant Leaders who will work with 3,000 new schools, and 1,500 that will continue for a second year in the programme. By the end of 2004-05, 6,500 schools (or 8,300, including the Consultant Leaders' own schools) will have been involved in the programme.

Networks of primary schools

47. To help raise standards, we will encourage primary schools to work together in networks. Many primary schools are small; and many feel isolated. Schools that belong to networks can:

- *Support each other in raising standards, by learning and improving together (perhaps including shared training, teachers observing teaching in other schools, a shared Advanced Skills Teacher in a particular subject, or shared work to support transition to secondary school);*
- *Offer children a wider range of opportunities, by sharing resources and staff (for example, sharing Advanced Skills Teachers, a music specialist, or a particularly good sports hall; holding joint clubs; or clubbing together for trips);*
- *Provide more comprehensive services to their community, working together – so that a network can provide the extended services described above;*
- *Bring benefits for leadership and management, for example through the sharing of bursars, or federating to share a single, strong governing body or even to appoint a single executive headteacher to run several schools. This will be an important way to make sure that good local schools can stay both local and viable even if they become much smaller as primary rolls fall.*

48. It may not be right for the same networks to perform all these different functions. But supporting effective learning networks of primary schools will be the single most important way in which we can build the capacity of primary schools to continue to develop and improve, and in particular to offer better teaching and learning and a wider range of opportunities to pupils and to their communities. From September 2004, there will be a funded programme for network development through the national Primary Strategy, focused on improving teaching and learning. We intend this to be the

foundation for a far wider range of networking activities in future.

Timetable for Change

Taken together, our reforms mean that:

Now, in 2004:

- *Our primary children are reading, writing and using numbers better than ever before*
- *Teaching in every subject in primary schools is better than it was in 1997*
- *Full service extended schools (both primary and secondary) are being established in our most deprived communities*
- *We are working with Local Authorities to try out new ways of working to take the burdens from schools*
- *We are moving into the second year of the biggest leadership programme run anywhere in the world, helping primary headteachers to help each other*
- *We are beginning a programme to support networks of primary schools*

By 2008:

- *We will have reached and sustained our literacy and numeracy targets of 85 percent of children reaching the expected level at the age of 11; and the proportion of schools in which fewer that 65 per cent of children reach this level reduced by 40 percent. Standards for pupils who have traditionally been failed by the system will be rising fastest, helping to close the social class gap*
- *Most primary children will be getting two hours of high quality PE and school sport each day; many will be learning a language from the age of seven, and getting the chance to learn a musical instrument at primary school*
- *Ofsted will show that standards of teaching have risen again across all curriculum subjects*
- *Primary schools will have universal access to broadband*
- *There will be many more extended schools, including at least 1,000 primary schools offering wrap-around 8am to 6pm guaranteed childcare*
- *The vast majority of primary schools will be part of an effective network that supports good teaching*

Our Long Term Aim:

- *Our world class standards maintained and raised for those groups which struggle most – closing the gap and achieving both excellence and equity*
- *Every child with at least two hours of good quality PE and school sport each week. All children with the opportunity to learn a modern foreign language from the age of seven and the chance to learn a musical instrument and to perform*
- *All schools making an extended offer to children and parents, either on their own or working with other schools, enriched by a huge range of out-of-school activities and opportunities, from chess to karate*
- *Every primary school part of an effective learning network*
- *Schools contributing to reversing year on year increases in childhood obesity*

Chapter 4
Independent Specialist Schools

Goal: More choice for parents and pupils; independence for schools

1. Our central purpose for every pupil over the next five years is to raise the quality of education, teaching and learning, and to widen the range of real choices which are available. We intend to build on the achievements of the last seven years, to increase freedoms and independence; to accelerate the pace of reform in teaching and learning (covered in Chapter 5); and to extend choice and flexibility in the curriculum, particularly at 14-19 (covered in Chapter 6).

2. Underpinning each of these is sustained and rising investment in schools. The typical secondary school budget has risen by some 30% in real terms since we took office, from £2.7m to £3.6m, as we have devolved more money and responsibility to headteachers and school governors. In the budget in March the Chancellor announced further increases for education stretching to 2007-08.

3. This chapter sets out our proposals to ensure that every parent can choose an excellent secondary school for their child. At its heart is the development of independent specialist schools in place of the traditional comprehensive – a decisive system-wide advance. We are not creating a new category of schools – rather, giving more independence to all schools within a specialist system. There will be:

- *Guaranteed funding and a wide range of freedoms for all schools;*
- *Extra freedoms and new roles for increasing numbers of high-performing specialist schools;*
- *More Academies, which operate as independent schools within the state system, in order to turn around persistent failure.*

4. Our best schools already have many of the characteristics we want for every school: autonomy, specialism, freedom of heads and governors to manage and personalise their provision, and an ethos of success and community responsibility. Our further reforms will extend the practical independence and capacity of all secondary schools. For schools which are failing to achieve their full potential, it will encourage greater independence as they are able and willing to take it on. In areas of failure and under-performance, it will equip schools with the leadership capacity essential for successful self-governance, while also opening up provision to a range of new sponsors, through the acadamies programme and the creation of other new schools to meet parental demand.

5. We will never return to a system based on selection of the few and rejection of the many; we will not abandon intervention in failing schools; and we will not cast aside our ambitious targets for schools to keep on improving. Independence will be within a framework of fair admissions, full accountability and strong partnerships that drive improvement.