

Dear Colleague

I wrote to you in September outlining the general direction of our plans for a schools White Paper. Today the coalition Government has published [The Importance of Teaching](#). In this, we set out our plans to reform the whole schools system, to transform education to make our nation one of the world's top performers, and to make opportunity more equal.

You can find all of the detailed information on the [Department's website](#). But in this letter I want to set out the thinking behind our approach and to alert you to some specific changes which will affect you.

It is because we believe in the importance of teaching that this white paper has been written. Nothing matters more in improving education than giving every child access to the best possible teaching.

There is no question that teaching standards and the quality of trainees have improved in recent decades. Your hard work and that of your staff has helped more children to succeed. But we need to do better – we have to match the world's best.

In England, what is needed now is decisive action to free our teachers and leaders from constraint and to improve their status and authority. We must raise standards, and – having freed schools from prescription – ensure that parents and the public can hold schools to account for the results they achieve. We need to recruit more great people into teaching, and better support those already in the classroom.

We want every school to be able to shape its own character, frame its own ethos and develop its own specialisms. We expect all schools, including academies, to use their new autonomy to work together – but collaboration in the future will be driven by school leaders and teachers, not bureaucrats.

Headteachers will have more freedom to take decisions about their own schools, more responsibility for their school's improvement, and more opportunities to work with other schools. We will increase the number of National and Local Leaders of Education, support other leadership programmes, and develop a national network of teaching schools. We will give heads more freedom to reward good performance, and make it easier for them to address underperformance. We will end the centralised target setting process and the requirement for every school to have a school improvement partner. We will strengthen heads' authority to maintain good behaviour.

Governors – the unsung heroes of our education system – will receive the recognition, support, and attention that they deserve. We will make it easier for governors to set high expectations and ask challenging questions. We will

work with partners to encourage professionals to volunteer as governors, and legislate to allow schools to adopt more flexible models of governance.

Teachers will learn from other teachers, by observing each other in the classroom, and we will boost the subject-specific element of continuous professional development. We want teachers to feel part of the intellectual fabric of the country and we will make more bursaries available for postgraduate qualifications. Teachers will have more authority and powers to tackle bad behaviour, and more protection from false allegations. We will continue to raise the quality of new teachers, and will reform Initial Teacher Training so that more training is in the classroom and focuses on core skills.

All schools and every member of the school community will benefit from more freedom, reduced duties, requirements and guidance, higher but fairer minimum standards for every school, better behaviour, sharper Ofsted inspection, better accountability to parents and the public, and a fairer funding system with more money targeted at the most disadvantaged children. And over time, every school that wishes to will have the opportunity to take on academy status.

We will listen to you as you consider what the changes will mean for your school, staff and pupils. Some important areas where we will be asking for your views over the coming months are:

- Children with special educational needs and disabilities: a call for views has recently closed, and we will be publishing a green paper with proposals on improving the system.
- Curriculum: the curriculum review (covering both primary and secondary) will be launched shortly. We intend to publish the new curriculum in the autumn of 2012 with first teaching in September 2013.
- Accountability: Ofsted will consult on a new framework. Subject to legislation, the new framework will come into force in autumn 2011.
- Admissions: we will consult on a simplified and less prescriptive Admissions Code.
- Independent reviews and consultations are also ongoing on Key Stage 2 assessment and accountability, 14-19 education, and the Early Years Foundation Stage.

But in the meantime, I would like to hear your initial thoughts and reactions to *The Importance of Teaching*. If you would like to comment now, please send your comment to the [Schools White Paper Team](#) by December 8. We will publish a summary of your comments and our response to your feedback on the website.



Michael Gove