

Letter from Ed Balls to school governors - 30 June 2009

I am writing to you today following the publication of the White Paper *Your child, your schools, our future: building a 21st century schools system*.

Firstly, I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your dedication and hard work. It is because of your contributions - backed up by the investment and reforms of the last decade - that we are in such a position of strength and can now be even more ambitious for every single child.

The White Paper sets out our continued commitment to work with you and your school to ensure that every child achieves their full potential and turns 18 with the knowledge, skills and qualifications that will give them the best chance of success in adult life in the 21st Century.

We must work together to create a world-leading system which is capable of delivering these entitlements and is responsive to the challenges of a changing global economy, a changing society, rapid technological innovation and a changing planet.

As school Governors you are crucial in meeting this challenge, and we will do all we can to support you. That is why we will:

- expect Local Authorities to make better use of local authority-appointed governors in securing improvement in schools;
- require governing bodies to consider formal partnership arrangements in specified situations, e.g. before appointing a new Head;
- improve Governor training and support;
- ensure School Improvement Partners provide information and advice to the governing body about the school's performance;
- increase Governors' powers to challenge performance and promote new developments and partnerships that will improve the achievement and wellbeing of children and young people; and
- enshrine in law governing bodies' fundamental duties to children, young people and the wider community.

In a world in which educational success for every child is ever more important, where the need for people who can be creative, think and learn throughout life has never been greater, and where there will be very few jobs left in the economy for people without skills and qualifications, the White Paper reasserts our ambition to create an education system which can prepare every young person to make a success of their life. The biggest challenge facing us in achieving that is to break the link between deprivation and low educational achievement.

The White Paper therefore builds on the many successes of schools and their staff over recent years, to seek to create new entitlements for all pupils and parents, which reflect the best of what schools are now doing. These new Pupil and Parent Guarantees will be enshrined in law. In the next phase of reform, we will put all our efforts into getting behind the efforts of schools to make them a reality for every pupil and every parent as early as possible.

Because schools will not be able to deliver the full Guarantee by acting alone, partnership and federation will be increasingly important so that schools can offer more to pupils and parents by acting together than they would in isolation. And because of the successes of schools and teachers in driving up standards and in embedding best practice in the classroom, we will now move to a new, more tailored way of supporting schools to improve. This does not mean that we are abandoning literacy and numeracy hours – on the contrary, we want them to stay, and Ofsted inspection will continue as now. But it does mean that we will move away from big, centrally managed contracts for supporting school improvement, towards a system where school leaders will have more flexibility to decide their own priorities for school improvement support.

The other key changes we are announcing today include:

- strengthened Home School Agreements so that all pupils and parents sign up to the school's rules when they apply for a school place;
- guaranteed extra personalised catch-up support for 11 year olds who have fallen behind in primary school and, linked to this, we will develop a new check on their progress at the end of their first year in secondary school;
- a new School Report Card that will provide clear information about each school's performance. A prospectus setting out our plans for developing the Report Card has been published today alongside the White Paper. Ofsted's new framework has already set out a higher standard for school inspection grades and more focus on schools facing problems;

- support for school improvement with all schools working in formal structured partnerships with other schools, colleges, universities, employers, children's services, improvement partners, local Children's Trusts and the wider community; and
- a system of accreditation where new and existing education providers are encouraged to use their expertise and experience to run new schools and grow chains of successful schools.

But it is not just Government and schools which have a role to play in building a 21st Century school system – parents, carers and young people must also play their part. That is why we have produced a parents' and carers' guide, and a children's guide, to help them understand what the White Paper means for them.

The guides, and the White Paper, can be found at www.dcsf.gov.uk/21stcenturyschoolssystem - I would urge you to encourage staff, parents and pupils at your school to read them.

I firmly believe that the White Paper will truly create a system which reflects the needs of schools, teachers and pupils in the 21st century. I look forward to continuing to work in partnership with you to build this system.

Education White Paper- the initial view from Local Authority

- Much of the White Paper is not really new. It re-packages a lot of ideas which have been circulating for quite a while
- Its drivers are the economic imperative of getting young people fit for a world of work and the moral imperative of doing the best for every child
- **It appears as if we are turning a corner from a competitive environment to one of collaboration with the aim of doing the best for every child**
- It is likely that future funding will shift to reflect these new initiatives
- **There is likely to be more emphasis on schools federating or otherwise linking up to share best practice**
- Schools with excellent practice will be accredited so that that practice can be used elsewhere
- **The White Paper heralds guarantees for pupils and for parents**
- The White Paper cannot be divorced from the context in which it is published. That is a world of decreasing resources and increasing accountability in which there has been a two-thirds increase in investment over recent years with outcomes remaining broadly constant

There are four main partnership themes:

- Extending opportunities so that students can access centres of excellence across the curriculum
- Hard-edged partnerships to extend the reach of the best leaders including Trusts, Federations and Academies
- Wider children's services
- Creating greater efficiencies within the current system

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Your Child, Your Schools, Our Future (Debbie Clapshaw's views)

The White Paper was launched by Ed Balls, Secretary of State for Children, Schools and families towards the end of June. The 96 page document includes chapter headings on:

- Preparing every child for the challenges of the 21st century
- Excellent teaching in every school with extra help for those that need it
- Every school working in partnerships
- Every school improving – strong accountability and rapid intervention
- The right roles for local and central government
- A well-led and highly skilled workforce

Governors will want to study the contents as there are implications for change within every chapter. Fortunately there is an Executive Summary and a letter to school governors from Ed Balls:

www.dcsf.gov.uk/21stcenturyschoolssystem

Key headlines for governors:

- The revitalisation of the Home School Agreement – dig it out, dust it down and give it a new lease of life! Once a child joins the school the parents will be expected to sign it each year. Parents will *'face real consequences'* if they fail to live up to the responsibilities set out within it.

- Guaranteed extra personalised catch-up support for 11 year olds who have fallen behind in primary school.
- A new Pupil Guarantee and a new Parent Guarantee (details in Chapter 2 of the White paper). Much greater expectation on the ways in which schools will communicate with and involve parents.
- A new School Report card – more information within a separate Prospectus also available on DCSF website. Once introduced this will replace the School Profile.
- Every school working in partnerships – because no school can do it alone. Legislation will come forward to make clear that schools have responsibilities for children across the area (eg a whole learning community) as well as those on their own roll. From September 2009 Ofsted will look at a school's contribution to partnership working and will grade schools on the effectiveness of their partnerships.
- Extension of the powers of the Local Authority to intervene where schools are underperforming, and an expectation that LAs will 'use these powers robustly'.
- A system of accreditation where new and existing education providers are encouraged to use their expertise and experience to run new schools and grow chains of successful schools.
- The role of the School Improvement Partner (SIP) to be reformed and enhanced. Governing bodies will be able to have a stronger say in who their SIP is, SIPs will be linked to a school for no more than three years.
- School funding to be reformed, major review of the distribution of the DSG from 2011, including challenging local authorities to reduce surplus places in schools and to maximise value for money. *DCSF 'want to see local authorities using the money they invest in small school subsidies to support small schools to work in partnerships, and we will consider how to facilitate this through the DSG review'.*
- Introduction of a new 'licence to teach' likely to be renewable every five years.
- Possibility of rationalising the overall range of policy documents which schools are required to have in place.
- All governing bodies will have to consider federation and/or shared/executive leadership before beginning the process of recruitment for a new head.

And finally on page 93 we come to: Governance – a strengthened model

- A commitment to ***'strengthening the system of school governance, improving governor training and enshrining in law the fundamental powers and duties of governing bodies'***. (*At the time of writing we are still awaiting the outcomes from the National Review into governance. It is to be hoped that there is a lot of synergy between the review and the White Paper*)

There is a recognition that 'good governance is a vital part of the functioning of any successful organisation', and the importance of the challenge and support role, but also in ensuring that *'taxpayers get good value for money and that public money is used properly'*.

There is an intention to enshrine in law governing bodies fundamental duties to children, young people and the wider community. Top three duties of a governing body identified as:

1. to ensure the education, development and wider well being of the children on their school's roll;
2. to promote the education, development and wider well being of all children in their area; and
3. to support the needs of the wider local community

More specifically mention is made of improved governor training, all governing bodies to be supported by a trained clerk, all Chairs of governors to undergo specific training for the role and a commitment to simplifying and streamlining the regulations around school governance. The thought of another reconstitution exercise fills us all with horror, but there is also a commitment to 'greater flexibility in the composition of governing bodies, and a relaxing of the rules in this area'. The devil will be in the detail of all of this and we await with interest. A lot depends on changes being brought forward through legislation and it remains to be seen what might be prioritised and achieved within a given timeframe.

The White Paper is hugely ambitious in scope and content and I encourage all governors to take time to look at these proposals in more detail and to identify the key areas for you and your schools, and of course as identified in this Paper – your communities.

Article for Autumn Term Devon Governor
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The White Paper – Your child, your schools, our future - NGA View

The White Paper finally made an appearance on the 30th June. Clare Collins in her blog has focused on its implications for governance, particularly the intention to strengthen the role of governing bodies by clarifying their duties and providing more training focused on the key role of holding the school to account. Away from governance, **the White Paper focused on the fact that the attainment gap between the most disadvantaged and advantaged is not narrowing quickly enough and remains wider than in many other countries. In order to continue to narrow the gap schools will need to work increasingly in partnership with other schools, and other agencies.** It recognises that in order to take the proposals in the White Paper forward the school workforce (teaching and support staff) need to have access to, and make use of, training and development opportunities. **The 'licence to teach' will see teachers reassessed every five years to ensure that their skills and knowledge are still fit for the job. Support staff working to support learning will have to have qualifications at Level 3. A School Report Card will be introduced, replacing the School Profile and providing information on a wider range of school outcomes, including wellbeing and parents' and pupils' views.** A separate prospectus was launched at the same time as the White Paper containing further details of School Report Card. It is intended to pilot arrangements over the next two years, starting in September 2009. The NGA will be producing a briefing paper for members on the White Paper, this will be available on the website early next week. **The White Paper and the School Report Card prospectus can be downloaded from the DCSF website via the attached links.**

NGA (10/07) Last week's White Paper continues to reverberate around the education world. On this issue the devil will most certainly be in the detail; yet the detail is what is missing from the White Paper. Another missing element is the timescale for implementation. One change is being consulted on as we speak (changes to Schools Forums) but there is little indication of when the government intends to follow through on matters like professional training for Clerks, or a new relationship with School Improvement Partners. Much of what is proposed does not actually need Parliamentary time; many of the proposed changes, including most of what is proposed for governing bodies, could be implemented via changes to regulations; by a process known as secondary legislation. There would be a need for consultation on each group of proposals but if the government really is determined to drive these changes through then some could be in place by January 2010. The license to teach proposal in the White Paper will apply to teachers in Academies. The five year MOT for teachers (which received a cautious welcome from the NGA) was not going to be applicable to Academy staff because they do not have to register with the General Teaching Council. The government has announced that this loophole will be closed.

21st Century Schools White Paper – NGA Briefing Paper

Introduction

1. The White Paper was finally published on 30 June 2009. The document contains six chapters each setting out the 'vision'
2. These chapters cover:
 1. The vision – what the Government want from education in the 21st Century
 2. The School – teaching and the learning
 3. Partnerships – the different partnerships required to meet the vision
 4. Accountability – The various steps in the accountability chain.
 5. Government and Local Authority roles
 6. Governance, leadership and the wider workforce
3. The White Paper contains much of interest to governors. Chapters 6 and 4, with their respective focus on leadership and accountability, are those most directly relevant, but these must be viewed through the vision for teaching and learning and increased partnership working set out in chapters 2 & 3.
4. This briefing starts with those sections, which will directly impact on governors and governance.

The Executive summary sets out the aims for governance:

- School governors play a vital role in our education system by holding to account the school's leadership for the performance of the school. We want to strengthen this role by enshrining in law governing bodies' fundamental duties to children, young people and the wider community.
- We will require SIPs to provide information and advice to the governing body about the school's performance, so that governors are more able to challenge and support school leaders. We will also improve governor training and expect all chairs of governing bodies to undergo specific training.
- We will expect initial training for governors to focus on the central tasks: providing effective challenge and support, holding to account, making effective use of data and information to manage performance and ensuring value for money. Governors will also be trained where appropriate in overseeing more than one

school and managing co-located services. And we will introduce greater flexibility into rules about the composition of governing bodies.

NEXT STEPS

Some of the White Paper will require primary legislation and some secondary legislation. The new governance duties will require primary legislation, but changes to the make-up of governing bodies and the requirement for Chairs of Governors to train can be made through changes to Regulations.

In some cases the ASCL Bill currently going through Parliament will create the primary legislation; in other cases more primary legislation will be needed. For any new primary legislation the timetable will be extremely tight, given that it will not be introduced until the new Parliamentary session in November 2009.

Governance, Leadership and the wider workforce - Chapter 6 only

11. The Government wants to strengthen the role of governing bodies, particularly in relation to their responsibility for challenging performance in order to improve outcomes for all young people. This improvement is to be achieved through better training, targeting recruitment, access to the information and data needed to do the job, and support from external bodies, such as the School Improvement Partner (SIP). Chapter 6 also sets out the need to train and reward school leaders for taking on more responsibility and the need to ensure the wider-workforce have the necessary skills.

Governance

12. The document makes passing reference to the Ministerial Review, the report from which has yet to be published, and states that the Government believes it is time to 'simplify and streamline' the governance regulations.

13. The Government plans to clarify the role of governors. In particular legislation will place upon governing bodies duties to:

- ensure the education, development and wider wellbeing of the children on their school's roll
- promote the education, development and wider wellbeing of all children in their area
- support the needs of the wider community

14. These new duties are very much in line with the theme of the document that, in order to give every child and young person the best opportunities, schools will need to work together and take collective responsibility for all young people, not just those on the roll of the school.

15. The plans to strengthen and streamline will come in the following manner:

- Greater flexibility around the composition of governing bodies with the proportionality requirements (for the various categories of governors) being relaxed
- Partnerships – existing rules will be relaxed to give the most effective governing bodies the opportunity to become accredited providers of new schools.

16. Governors are to be encouraged to establish links with business and to recruit governors from both businesses and other education bodies (e.g. colleges, universities and independent schools). They will also be encouraged to establish formal links with such bodies through Trusts. The governing body will also have to appoint a governor with responsibility for business partnerships (see the section on partnership working page 12)

17. In addition, there will be a new requirement for all governing bodies to consider, at the point at which they need to recruit a new headteacher, whether to federate or appoint a shared/executive headteacher.

Training

18. Training for governors is to be further developed:

- Chairs of governing bodies will be expected to undergo specific training for the role.
- Local authority induction training for governors should focus on how to provide effective challenge and support, to hold to account and make good use of data to manage performance, to ensure value for money and to oversee more than one school.

Data

19. Governors should already receive good quality information through the RAISEonline system. The intention is to extend what is available so that governors have all the information they need to carry out their functions effectively.

School Improvement Partners (SIPs)

20. The expanded role of SIPs is covered in more detail in the accountability section. The key point for governors is that they will be given a role in choosing the SIP for their school and there will be a clear requirement for SIPs to report and provide advice to the governing body.

21. The governing body will be given the opportunity to request an Ofsted inspection (e.g. where the SIP has expressed concern about the performance of the school).

Headteacher and the Senior Leadership Team

22. The paper acknowledges that the role of headteachers has already changed and will continue to do so as the White Paper is implemented. The range of roles for headteachers will cover:

- Working as School Improvement Partners or Local or National Leaders of Education
- Taking the lead in local partnerships
- Working as Executive Headteachers – leading two or more schools in a federation or partnership.
- Leading multi-agency teams as part of early intervention strategies.

23. The government wants to encourage the best headteachers to spread their expertise outside of their own school.

Headteacher pay

24. The current School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD) has fallen behind developments in headship and in particular makes no allowance for executive heads of federations. As an interim measure the Schools Teachers' Review Body (STRB) has proposed and the Government has recommended that from September 2009 governing bodies will be able to offer a 5-20% premium on existing salaries for heads where they have taken on additional responsibilities.

25. A further review of leadership pay will take place so that all relevant models of leadership can be recognised and rewarded in the STPCD.

Issues to consider

26. The premium on pay is specifically for additional responsibilities, not to reward good performance. Governors will need to keep detailed records of any decision to award the headteacher a premium.

Licence to Teach

27. The DCSF has already introduced plans to make teaching a Masters-level profession. From January 2010 the first new teachers will start their Masters qualification in teaching and learning. They now plan to introduce a renewable licence for teachers to provide ongoing evidence that they are still able to do the job.

28. Probably every five years teachers will be assessed to ensure that their knowledge and skills still meet the required level. The assessment process will focus on teachers' recent record of professional practice and development. The General Teaching Council will be carrying forward work on the licence with its planned introduction in September 2010 in maintained schools (community, foundation, voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools) and in non-maintained special schools and short stay schools (formerly pupil referral units). The scheme will not cover Academies – it is not clear if they will fall under the scheme in future.