

A School System Shaped by Parents



Summary:

To create a school system shaped by parents we will:

- enable every school to become a self-governing Trust school, with the benefit of external drive and new freedoms, mirroring the successful experience of Academies;
- continue to promote Academies as a key part of our system, with at least 200 established or in the pipeline by 2010, tackling the acute challenges in areas of real and historical underperformance;
- create a new Office of the Schools Commissioner to promote the development of Trusts and Trust schools;
- enable parents to demand new schools and new provision, backed by a dedicated stream of capital funding;
- encourage existing schools to expand and federate to meet demand; and make it easier for independent schools to enter the state system;
- create new vocational provision for 14-19 year olds;
- give the weakest schools a year to improve or face closure, with a stronger role for local authorities in tackling failure and underperformance; and
- boost the autonomy and performance of all schools with less bureaucracy and lighter touch inspection for high performing schools.

2.1 We are determined to transform our school system into one that responds better to the needs and aspirations of parents. Every parent should be confident that the system is delivering for their child. Every community should be confident that all parents can choose an excellent school. And the nation needs to ensure that areas of underperformance which undermine our efforts to improve social mobility are tackled vigorously.

2.2 To create real choice and diversity for parents, we need:

- all schools to have the freedom to shape their own destiny in the interest of parents and children;
- good schools to be able to expand or take over other schools to spread their influence and benefit more parents;
- all schools to be good schools – and constantly striving to be better;
- an easy route through which parents can generate change; and
- new providers rooted in their community.

Context

2.3 Much has changed in our education system over recent years:

- Specialist schools have drawn enormous energy, drive and expertise from the contribution of their sponsors in developing their individual character and ethos. The benefits have been clear in the results they have achieved and in their popularity with parents.
- We have learnt from Academies that in areas of entrenched underperformance, the combination of real freedoms, fresh buildings, focused governance, external drive, technology and independence can bring fast results. Over the next few years Academies will make an increasingly important contribution to the reformed and more flexible school system that we want to create.
- Our reforms of early years provision and Sure Start are showing the importance of involving parents fully in services that support their child's development. Children's Trusts are showing how local integration of services led by a strong commissioner can increase diversity and drive up standards.

2.4 The challenge we now face is to spread these lessons through the whole school system in a way that works for parents and children in all communities across the country.

2.5 At the heart of this new vision are Trust schools. Trusts will harness the external support and a success culture, bringing innovative and stronger leadership to the

school, improving standards and extending choice. We will encourage all primary and secondary schools to be self-governing and to acquire a Trust.

- 2.6** We need to establish dynamic and responsive local leadership for the new school system. Therefore, we will clarify the role of local authorities as the champions of parents and as the commissioners of school places (see Chapter 9). We will strengthen the role of parents to shape the local school system. This approach will ensure a seamless connection between schools and local services for children and young people.

Self-governing Trust schools

- 2.7** To provide a genuinely personalised education, every school needs to be free to develop a distinctive ethos and to shape its curriculum, organisation and use of resources. These decisions cannot be prescribed uniformly. We need schools working with parents, children and local communities to drive reform, not central or local Government.
- 2.8** Headteachers and governing bodies are currently responsible for the conduct of their school, and are free to enter into federations with other schools. There are also freedoms to innovate in the National Curriculum, as well as flexibilities within the national system of determining teachers' pay.
- 2.9** Self-governing (Foundation) schools also control their assets, employ their own staff and set their own admissions criteria, within the law and taking full account of the Admissions Code of Practice. We believe all schools should be able to have these freedoms. We have already created a fast-track so that the governing body of a secondary school, after consulting its parents, can become a self-governing (Foundation) school by a simple majority vote. We will now extend this fast-track to primary schools.
- 2.10** To spread innovation and diversity across the whole school system, we will promote the establishment of self-governing Trust schools.
- 2.11** Trusts will be not-for-profit organisations, able to appoint governors to the school, including – where the Trust wishes – the majority of the governing body, as in existing voluntary aided schools. The governing body, which can be as small as 11 members, will also include elected parents, staff governors and representatives from the local authority and the local community. Where a Trust appoints the majority of the governors, it will be required to establish a Parents' Council to ensure that parents have a strong voice in decisions about the way the school is run (see Chapter 5).
- 2.12** The governing body of any existing primary or secondary school will be able to create its own Trust, or link its school with an existing Trust. Trust status for special schools raises a number of complex issues and we will continue to work with schools to decide the best way forward.

- 2.13** Acquiring a Trust will be a straightforward process. The governing body would first consult with parents to ensure support for the idea and for the particular Trust it proposes to acquire. They would then publish formal proposals. Schools that acquire faith-based Trusts would not automatically become faith schools – that would require a separate statutory process.
- 2.14** We are confident that parents will welcome proposals for schools to acquire Trusts which are focused on driving up standards and creating new opportunities for children. However, the local authority can refer the governing body's decision to the Schools Adjudicator for determination, if it is clear that the decision has failed to take proper account of the views of the majority of parents, or if there are serious concerns about the impact of the acquisition of the Trust on school standards.
- 2.15** We have already passed legislation to require all new or replacement secondary schools – to be subject to local authority competitions – whether arising as a result of reorganisations, school failure, or demographic change (see Chapter 9). We will now extend this legislation to primary schools. All new or replacement schools will be self-governing (Foundation), Trust, voluntary aided or – where appropriate – Academies.
- 2.16** As well as the drive and direction brought to the school by Trust-appointed governors, Trust schools will have the freedoms and flexibilities that self-governing (Foundation) schools currently enjoy. They will employ their own staff, control their own assets and set their own admissions arrangements. Trusts will also be able to apply to the Secretary of State for additional flexibilities – any granted in this way will apply across all of the schools supported by the Trust. This could include additional curriculum flexibilities and freedoms over pay and conditions, where the Trust can demonstrate that these will raise standards.
- 2.17** Trusts will enable groups of schools to operate with a common ethos and a shared identity. Trusts associated with more than one school will be able to drive innovation and best practice rapidly across a number of schools, for example by developing a distinctive approach to the curriculum and teaching. This will lead to a wider range of approaches, more innovation and greater choice for parents.

The Mercers' Company – sharing expertise across schools

In 2005 every student achieved at least 10 GCSEs at grades A*-C at Thomas Telford School, where the two major sponsors (the Mercers' Company and Tarmac plc) form the majority of the governing body. The Mercers' Company and Thomas Telford have in turn sponsored two Academies in the West Midlands and apply a common educational philosophy to them, including parents' 'Advisory Councils'. These provide advice and raise issues with the headteacher, help with the development of school policies on matters such as behaviour and health and sex education, and encourage parents to make use of the school's systems.

Outreach and support work is undertaken with other local schools in the area, both through partnership agreements and a range of projects.

A group of sixteen schools and colleges (independent, maintained, Academies and sixth form colleges) are closely associated with the Mercers' Company. At some of the schools the Company appoints the whole governing body, and at others it has a right to representation, or is invited to appoint governors.

Governors are able to draw on a wide range of expertise and experience of those in different education sectors; they shape the ethos and promote the success of the schools they support and bring ideas, energy and commitment to them.

- 2.18** Trusts will also secure efficiencies, for example in administration, and enable successful approaches to school management to be adopted easily elsewhere. They will be an engine for real collaboration between schools, including between secondary schools and their feeder primaries. Where Trusts are linked to larger organisations, they could also give schools access to facilities and management expertise that might not be available within the local community.
- 2.19** There are a wide range of organisations who may wish to act to establish Trusts in partnership with schools. Trusts may be formed by neighbourhood groups or by local parents with a keen interest in the success of the school – such as the parents' group working to establish a new school in Lambeth. Educational and other charities will also wish to be involved, as in the Academies programme. We would like to see universities and independent schools setting up Trusts. Some schools may wish to form their own bespoke Trusts. We will work with potential Trusts and interested schools over the next year to develop pathfinder projects.
- 2.20** We will encourage voluntary controlled schools – most of which are Church of England primary schools – to become Trust schools. This will, for the first time, enable their existing Trusts to appoint the majority of the governing body – an advantage currently enjoyed by voluntary aided schools. We will also explore

with existing voluntary aided schools whether they would also like to move to Trust status.

The Schools Commissioner

- 2.21** We will establish a new Office of the Schools Commissioner to act as a national champion for the development of Trust schools and to work with potential Trusts. The Schools Commissioner will also support and secure the significant changes in the way local authorities commission schools for their communities.
- 2.22** The Commissioner will work with both national organisations and local community and parent organisations, particularly those in disadvantaged areas, spreading knowledge of what works and stimulating innovation. The Commissioner will provide a troubleshooting service and model documentation to enable potential Trusts to put forward proposals quickly and with minimum bureaucracy.
- 2.23** The Schools Commissioner will link local authorities to Trusts, identifying opportunities for existing successful Trusts to form partnerships with more schools, and supporting independent schools wishing to join the maintained sector. In order to do this, the Commissioner will hold details of organisations willing and able to establish Trusts for schools.
- 2.24** The Commissioner will also be able to challenge local authorities that fail to exercise their new duties adequately, including in relation to school expansion and sixth form provision. The Commissioner will advise the Secretary of State on local authorities' plans for major capital investment, challenge local authorities to work together to maximise choice, diversity and fair access, and will liaise with local authorities to identify potential Academy projects.
- 2.25** The Commissioner will also monitor key local indicators of parental satisfaction and rising school standards, and publish an Annual Report. Where progress is proving unsatisfactory or where a local authority fails in its extended duty to promote choice, diversity and fair access and to respond to parents, the Schools Commissioner will advise the Secretary of State on the exercise of her powers of intervention.

Safeguards

- 2.26** Trust schools will be, in effect, independent state schools, but will remain part of the local authority family of schools. The National Curriculum, the assessment regime and the usual provisions on teachers' pay will apply, except where the Trust has agreed flexibilities (as above). Trust schools will be funded in exactly the same way as other local schools. They will be subject to the Code of Practice on admissions and to all of the accountability mechanisms that apply to state schools.

- 2.27** We expect Trust schools to raise standards and to create more diversity. However, should a Trust school be judged inadequate by Ofsted, the local authority will have the same range of intervention powers as with any other failing or underperforming school. In the case of severe failure, the local authority will – as with any other school – be able to propose its closure and to hold a competition for a new school to be established. In such circumstances, the assets of the school would revert to the local authority, except where they were originally provided by the Trust.
- 2.28** All Trusts which hold land and appoint Governors to schools must be charities and will be regulated by the Charity Commission. They will be required to use any income that they receive or generate for their charitable purposes. Trusts cannot receive any income from the schools' budget. Trusts will also be under a duty to promote community cohesion and good race relations. We are considering what role the Schools Commissioner could play here and whether further safeguards are needed to prevent the entry of inappropriate Trusts.

Academies

- 2.29** The advent of Trust schools marks a decisive step in enabling all schools to access the freedoms and flexibilities that have underpinned our Academies programme.
- 2.30** Academies will continue to play a vital role in the system. 27 Academies are now open: by 2010, at least 200 will be open or in the pipeline in areas of traditionally low standards – each a new school with dedicated capital and sponsorship. Academies can also be established through Building Schools for the Future capital investment proposals and school competitions. This could result from population growth, school reorganisations or the replacement of a failing school. The Secretary of State will consider all such proposals, with priority given to projects with radical and innovative approaches to tackling educational disadvantage. Independent schools joining the maintained sector may also be eligible for Academy status (see below). The new Schools Commissioner will liaise with local authorities to identify potential Academy projects.

Parental demand for new schools

- 2.31** The development of Trust schools will drive improvement and diversity throughout the system. But, in some places, parents may feel that what is needed is an entirely new school or new provision within an existing school. We want to make it easier for them to express their views and to trigger action.
- 2.32** We will give parents the right to ask for a new primary or secondary school. They may do so in order to improve standards of local education, to meet a lack of faith provision, to tackle entrenched inequalities or to promote innovative teaching methods. Local authorities will be under a duty to be responsive to

parental interests. Where these demands have support, they will be expected to provide dedicated consultancy support to help parents develop a concrete proposal. The Schools Commissioner will also be able to provide information on the approaches taken in other localities.

Elmcourt School

In September 2007 a new secondary school set up by a group of 105 parents will open in West Norwood.

The proposals were agreed in July 2005, and the parents are now ready to start recruiting a Head and senior staff. They are working closely with the local authority and the DfES.

The Elmcourt parents came together when Lambeth conducted a public consultation inviting parents to come forward as parent promoters to open a new school in West Norwood. Motivated by the need for a school that would serve their children and the local community, the parents developed their own proposals and drove them forward through consultation and committees, engaging local residents and representatives as well as national politicians. They are now beginning work with Lambeth to design and build the new school buildings at the five acre site. Their spokesman said:

“Among the parents at 13 feeder primary schools, you’re going to find enough parents with the right skills to organise and manage such a big project, but actually what is most important is the energy, the freshness and the commitment that we’ve brought.”

- 2.33** The local authority will decide whether the proposal to establish a new school should be taken forward, or whether the demands can be better met in other ways. Parents will have the right of appeal to the Schools Adjudicator if their proposals are rejected.
- 2.34** Any capital funding needed for new schools will usually be provided by existing capital programmes such as Building Schools for the Future, the Targeted Capital Fund and the formula funding that local authorities receive. To reduce costs, we would also expect local authorities to consider whether a new school could be housed on an existing site, possibly shared with an existing school or using, in the short term, high quality temporary buildings. We expect technology requirements to be defined and met in parallel with school design and build.
- 2.35** However, there will be cases where capital is not available. We will establish a dedicated capital fund that will support strong and innovative proposals that come from parents. Local authorities will normally be expected to provide a site for successful proposals.

- 2.36** Where a new school is established as a result of parental demand, or an existing school chooses to expand, the result may be that there are more surplus places. Local authorities will need to move quickly to close schools that are failing to attract sufficient pupils and to consider whether the capital assets released could be used to inject new dynamism into the system.

Independent schools joining the state system

- 2.37** In the past, parents' demands for different types of schools have often led to the creation of independent schools. A number of these schools would prefer to be accessible to all parents, not just those who can afford to pay. We will make it easier for such independent schools to enter the maintained sector. This will extend parental choice and increase the number of places available at good state schools. We have already funded the Association of Muslim Schools to provide consultancy support to some independent Muslim schools interested in joining the maintained sector.
- 2.38** Such schools will, of course, not be able to charge fees. They will also have to meet the essential requirements of the maintained system, including the teaching of a full curriculum, the assessment and accountability regimes, and a fair admissions policy.

14 – 19 Opportunities

- 2.39** Delivering the plans set out in our White Paper *14-19 Education and Skills* requires more vocational provision – available to young people through both schools and colleges. This will be provided by schools taking on an additional specialism in a vocational area, as well as by Centres of Vocational Excellence, the wider College sector and work-based learning providers.
- 2.40** We will make it easier for secondary schools to open a sixth form. There will be a presumption that proposals from high performing specialist schools to add a sixth form will be approved. We are making funds available through the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to enable such schools to add the buildings they need, with priority given to those which are making a significant contribution to the delivery of the new 14-19 curriculum and qualifications opportunities.
- 2.41** Where local authorities run competitions, we will expect them to specify, having considered the gaps in quality as well as quantity of provision available, what contribution the new school should make to the delivery of the 14-19 reforms. We will also introduce competitions for new 16-19 provision, to encourage high quality, innovative proposals. As with school competitions, these will include a clear specification of the contribution that new provision will be expected to make to the 14-19 reforms. This may include a role in the vocational education of 14-16 year-olds in local schools. We will expect new vocational providers to offer the new specialised Diplomas, including to 14-16 year-olds at other local schools.

Expansion and federation

- 2.42** Often parents are less interested in a brand new school for their child than in having the opportunity to get their child into an existing good school.
- 2.43** Schools that are popular with local parents, but are oversubscribed, should have an easy route to expansion. There is already a strong presumption that proposals for expansion will be approved; and schools have a right of appeal to the Schools Adjudicator if they are turned down. We also provide capital funding to popular and successful non-selective secondary schools that wish to expand, and we will consider whether to extend this to primary schools as part of the new primary capital programme (see Chapter 9). We will actively encourage schools to take up these incentives, subject to available resources.
- 2.44** We will also encourage schools and admissions authorities to consider smaller scale expansions. Foundation and voluntary aided schools already have the right to do this through the admissions process, provided that in primary schools the expansion would not contravene the infant class size pledge. Trust schools will also have this right.

The expansion of Parrenthorn High School

Parrenthorn High School is so popular with parents that they are creating 135 more places over the next five years.

For several years now, the school has been heavily oversubscribed, and each year the school has had to turn away pupils wanting to come to the school. In 2003, the school's governing body discussed the possibility of expansion with their local authority, and in September 2005 they added their first extra intake of 27 new places in year 7.

Extra funding has helped provide three new classrooms, equipped with a full range of ICT including interactive whiteboards and wireless internet facilities. The school predicts that greater economies of scale will enable them to spend more money on staffing and expanding the curriculum. The headteacher says, "We're responding to local demand, and the school is going to keep on succeeding."

- 2.45** Expansion will not be the answer for every good school. The size of the school and the nature of the site may prevent expansion. Parents at the school may feel that expansion could undermine its ethos. In these cases, we want schools to form joint ventures or merge with another school – so that good management practice and approaches can be spread across the system.

2.46 Schools may come together to share best practice, pool resources and offer a wider range of opportunities to both children and staff. Groups of schools which share the same Trust will wish to share good practice. In addition, formal federations where schools share a single governing body can involve all types of schools, across all age ranges. For example:

- a federation of a secondary school with its feeder primary schools would allow specialist staff for science and music to work in the primary schools, and use primary expertise to strengthen catch-up programmes in the secondary school;
- special schools could similarly strengthen their role at the heart of the system by working closely with one or more mainstream schools, offering pupils a pattern of provision tailored to their needs and breaking down unhelpful barriers between special and mainstream education; and
- a group of primary schools might federate to extend the best practice of the most successful schools, to deliver specialist or extended services and to improve efficiency.

2.47 Federations and other forms of collaboration will be particularly important in the delivery of our 14-19 and extended school reforms. We expect schools increasingly to choose to work together with other schools, including independent schools, colleges and services to deliver the full range of opportunities which children and young people should be able to access. In the primary phase, increased collaboration will be essential if schools are to meet the challenge of falling rolls. At secondary level, we have set a clear expectation that by 2007 all secondary schools will form or join a partnership to improve the management of bad behaviour and persistent truancy and will have admissions protocols for 'hard to place' pupils.

The West Sussex Federation

Attendance and pupil performance has risen at both Littlegreen and St. Anthony's special schools since they formed a federation with a joint governing body.

Littlegreen has improved particularly. In 2002/03, 7% of lessons were regarded as unsatisfactory, in 2005, none of them were. Chichester High School for Boys, an associate member of the federation, has already benefited from membership of the federation. It set very challenging targets to reduce fixed term exclusions and as a result of the support from the other schools in the federation has seen a 10 % reduction in fixed term exclusions.

St. Anthony's caters for children with a wide range of learning difficulties and autism, while Littlegreen caters for 42 boys with severe social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, the majority of whom have been excluded from other schools. The leadership teams of both the special schools have been restructured. There is one 'executive' headteacher, an 'operational' head and a head of teaching and learning in both schools. Already the level and depth of the collaboration and partnership between the schools has exceeded anything the schools have experienced before.

The support from all three schools has allowed staff to share skills, and they have been involved in practical activities such as moderating pupil's work across the curriculum, sharing in training sessions and jointly supporting very difficult to place pupils across all three schools. They have also invested in an ICT infrastructure to allow the effective communication and sharing of information, and teaching materials.

2.48 We will support greater collaboration through:

- The development of Education Improvement Partnerships which provide a framework for schools and others to work together. We expect established school partnerships, for example those in Excellence in Cities and Leadership Incentive Grant areas, to take full advantage of these new arrangements.
- The use of our capital investment programmes, including the new primary programme, all of which will be geared to supporting greater joint working between schools.
- The expectation that all secondary schools will form or join partnerships with other schools to improve behaviour, reduce persistent truancy and provide alternative education for excluded pupils (see Chapter 7).

- The Specialist Schools programme, which requires schools to demonstrate how they will use their expertise for the benefit of other schools and the wider community. We will offer at least 500 of our most successful specialist schools the opportunity to take on a more significant role leading the local system.
- The development of Primary Strategy Learning Networks, where a group of primary schools come together to improve teaching and learning, especially in English and maths.
- Local partnership arrangements set up to deliver 14-19 reform and provide information, advice and guidance to young people.

Tackling school failure

- 2.49** The greatest denial of parental choice is when the schools that are on offer are simply not good enough. We want every school to be a good school: parents should expect no less.
- 2.50** There has been a steady increase in the number of good and excellent schools. But there are some communities – often in our most disadvantaged areas – where school standards are poor.
- 2.51** That is why we must not tolerate school failure. Underperformance must be remedied swiftly and decisively. This is already happening where local authorities have effective systems for monitoring school performance and take quick action to address concerns. However, there are still too many areas where vulnerable schools are not identified early enough, and the process of agreeing and putting into effect a recovery plan for the school is stalled by indecision and lack of agreement.
- 2.52** The new Ofsted inspection regime will bring greater rigour to the system, with schools taking more responsibility for their own self-evaluation. Inspections will be more frequent, shorter and sharper, with minimal advance notice. Schools will be inspected once every three years (rather than every six) and will be graded as ‘outstanding’, ‘good’, ‘satisfactory’ or ‘inadequate’. The criteria that will underpin these judgements will raise the bar on underperformance. ‘Satisfactory’ will be a demanding standard, and will not be awarded where there are any aspects of unsatisfactory performance at a school.
- 2.53** Inadequate schools will receive an Improvement Notice or, in cases of severe problems, be placed in Special Measures. We therefore propose to ensure that local authorities, as the champions of local parents and pupils, tackle these situations urgently and swiftly. We propose to extend the range of intervention powers available to local authorities to tackle these situations. We will:

- place a duty on local authorities to consider the full range of their powers immediately on receipt of an adverse Ofsted report; and
- remove the outdated Code of Practice on local authority and school relations to enable more decisive intervention, and to take account of the introduction of School Improvement Partners (SIPs) through the New Relationship with Schools (see below).

2.54 The actions we expect local authorities to consider, and which must be reflected in their action plan, are:

- the immediate change of head teacher and/or members of the school management team;
- suspension of the delegation of the school's budget to enable the local authority to put the necessary improvement measures in place;
- appointing additional governors;
- replacing the governing body with an Interim Executive Board;
- appointing a partner to help the weak school (see below). This may involve the voluntary collaboration of a successful school, or a formal federation; and
- in certain cases, immediate closure of the school followed by a school competition.

2.55 Where a school is placed in Special Measures, action must be fast and decisive. A school in Special Measures will have one year only to demonstrate real progress. If it fails, the presumption will be that the school will be closed if necessary using the Secretary of State's reserve powers, with a replacement school or Academy normally opened on the same site. Similarly, a school issued with an Improvement Notice will have one year to demonstrate progress. If it has not done so, it will be placed in Special Measures.

2.56 There are a disproportionate number of special schools catering for children with behavioural, emotional and social disorders (BESD) which are failing. This is clearly unacceptable. Local authorities will have the same powers of intervention in these schools as they do for all others. However, they should ensure that there are sufficient places for children with BESD before closing such schools.

2.57 We will give the local authority a new power – where a school is failing or at risk of failure – to require the school to join a federation or enter other collaborative arrangements. We will also revise the process whereby local authorities can issue warning notices to schools where there are real concerns about performance or management. At present, this process is bureaucratic and time-consuming. We will make it quicker and simpler, and extend its application to coasting schools, as well as those with outright poor standards.

The School Improvement Partnership Board at George Salter High School and Shireland Language College

George Salter High School in Sandwell was in serious decline, with only 16% of pupils leaving with 5 A*-C grade GCSEs. The school has made considerable progress since federating with a nearby school and reports that over two years its performance has almost trebled to 55%.

In 2003, a School Improvement Partnership Board was set up to help tackle the school's decline through a tailored package of support and close collaboration with Shireland, a successful neighbouring school. Mark Grundy, the headteacher of Shireland, took over the strategic running of both schools and devised the recovery plan for George Salter.

- 2.58** Warning notices will help authorities and schools address weaknesses at an earlier stage and, in some cases, prevent formal school failure. Every school will be expected to tackle significant underperformance, even if it affects only a minority of its pupils. If it does not, it may find it receives a more formal challenge, which would, if unheeded, trigger the range of local authority interventions for such schools.
- 2.59** When a school is judged as inadequate by Ofsted, parents must be actively involved in shaping the way forward. The local authority will be under a new duty to ensure effective communication with parents. They may appoint a suitably experienced person to act as a 'Parents' Champion' – to help parents understand the nature of the problems at their school and the options available to address them – and then to represent their interests and help them contribute to planning the future of their children's education.

Tackling coasting schools and coasting departments

- 2.60** For the great majority of schools, the challenge is to secure continuous improvement – moving from satisfactory to good, and then from good to excellent. No parent should feel that their child is at a school that is content merely to remain satisfactory.
- 2.61** We are introducing a new system of support, challenge and accountability – known as the New Relationship with Schools. It emphasises each school's responsibility to manage its own improvement; it is designed to reduce bureaucracy and streamline working arrangements, releasing more energy to focus on local priorities. The New Relationship will highlight schools, and departments within schools, which should be doing much better given the prior attainment of their intake. It will bear down on those schools that do not recognise their weaknesses.

2.62 Schools will be held to account locally and supported by a single School Improvement Partner (SIP) – a nationally accredited expert, usually a headteacher, working for the local authority. All secondary schools will have a SIP by Autumn 2006. The New Relationship involves:

- stronger self-evaluation, drawing on the excellent electronic tools and data now available to all schools on individual pupil performance; and
- peer challenge to the school through the SIP, who will report to the governing body each year on the school's performance and contribute to the performance assessment of the headteacher. The SIP will also assist the school in identifying appropriate sources of support – for example, expertise in a vocational subject, extra training for catch-up and stretch or specialised tuition in music.

2.63 School Improvement Partners will be equipped with new data that will pinpoint pupils or groups of pupils (for example those from a particular minority ethnic group or middle ability boys) who are making less than expected progress, either across the board or in particular subject areas. They will then work with their schools, assisting them to put in place plans for improvement.

2.64 These policies have already been trialled successfully and welcomed by schools. All primary and secondary schools will be allocated a School Improvement Partner, phased in nationally from this year. We want to see continuous improvement in special schools too. For this reason, we expect special schools to participate fully in the New Relationship with Schools. We are currently trialling how they might best benefit from the support of a School Improvement Partner.

2.65 Ofsted will also consult on moving to a more proportionate inspection system from September 2006. High-performing schools might receive minimal inspection, while under-performing schools could be inspected more frequently, with a focus on those issues of concern in the school.

Raising attainment at Key Stage 3

West Sussex local authority involved ten secondary schools in the New Relationship with Schools trials and the schools have already started to reap the benefits.

- At **Davison High School**, the School Improvement Partner and headteacher analysed a range of data closely, and identified significant underachievement in science. A package of support was agreed with the school that involved a specific role for the Local Authority Science Adviser. Paired lesson observations, advice and very close monitoring led to results in science improving by 8% at Level 5 and 6% at Level 6. Results in English and maths also rose by 5% and 3% respectively.
- At **Bourne Community College**, discussions between the School Improvement Partner and headteacher identified good practice in the English department in the use of data and target setting. These strategies have been shared with departments across the College and the science department has benefited particularly, with Key Stage 3 results improving by 7% at 5+, 7% at 6+ and 9% at 7+.

Less bureaucracy

- 2.66** A key element of the New Relationship with Schools is freeing up schools and reducing bureaucracy. We have made important progress. From 2006/07 multi-year budgets will be introduced to give even greater stability to schools' planning.
- 2.67** It is important that schools make the best use of the very substantial financial resources that we are making available. We will look to all schools to improve the efficiency and effectiveness with which they use their resources, so that they can free up resources to invest in better outcomes for children, and drive up standards for all pupils. We will provide guidance and assistance to schools, and will expect local authorities to do the same. Areas in which we believe better value for money is attainable include the procurement of goods and services, procurement and use of ICT, management of resources within the school, and deployment of staff through the continuation of workforce reform.
- 2.68** We are also committed to setting schools free from excessive bureaucracy. We believe that schools should only be doing those things that are essential to raising pupil standards and realising every child's potential. Schools will be held to account more intelligently. In the past they have had to bid for small sums of money and account separately for each funding stream. In the future, schools will only be required to produce a single school plan containing sensible, yet

challenging, outcome measures. Technology is providing more efficient and effective solutions, creating a step-change in the way that data is collected, analysed and used to drive improvement.

2.69 We set up the Implementation Review Unit (IRU), an independent group of heads and others. It is chaired by Dr. Chris Nicholls, the headteacher of a successful secondary school, to provide scrutiny of the plans of Government, agencies and local authorities in the interests of minimising burdens on schools. For example, with the IRU's help, we are making good progress in reducing the bureaucracy associated with Special Educational Needs, and will continue to work with local authorities to deliver further improvements. We believe that the IRU is doing valuable work and propose to continue its work to at least 2008.

A system to deliver for parents and pupils

2.70 The system we are putting in place through these proposals aligns incentives, accountability and funding in order to promote our goals of excellence and equity. Throughout the system there will be strong pressures for school improvement:

- at a national level, we set expectations, provide support and intervene to tackle failure and underperformance in deprived areas. Ofsted's sharper inspection regime will hold schools to account for how every child performs;
- local authorities will have a clear focus on driving improvement and championing the interests of pupils and parents. More school competitions and clusters of schools working together through shared Trusts and federations will spur innovation;
- in every school, headteachers, teachers and support staff will have the support and freedoms they need to ensure personalised learning for every child. More focused governance will strengthen the leadership of our schools; and,
- we will increase the bottom-up pressure for improvement through greater parental choice, and a stronger parental voice within the school.