



Damian Hinds
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Good morning, my name is Damian Hinds, and like Helen I'm one of the 232 MPs elected for the first time in 2010. I am not a *member* of the **government** and don't speak *for* the government, but I am a keen supporter of it, and as a member of the Education **select committee** spend quite a lot of time studying what it is doing on schools.

When we were at school we were taught "**Don't judge a book by its cover**".

But with the Education white paper, I think you can do exactly that. Pretty much everything you need to know about Michael Gove's approach to schools is there in the title on page 1: "**The Importance of Teaching**".

I do believe we probably have the **best generation** of teachers ever in this country. What's more they work harder, setting objectives, planning material, and tailoring of approaches to different learning styles and individual pupil needs – certainly far more than when I was at school.

The **status and authority** of teachers needs to be protected and bolstered.

- I welcome the clear re-statement of teachers' absolute right to impose reasonable measures for classroom **discipline**, and protect them from frivolous and vexatious **allegations**

Teachers often say they feel '**burdened**' by **targets**, and there is too much prescription, too many directives.

- The government will review the **National Curriculum** and slim it down from its current 200 pages to something more focused on core knowledge, that leaves space for more innovation and indeed other learning.

We need even more talent coming in to the profession.

- **Teach First** is an exceptionally successful programme, and the 4th largest graduate recruitment programme last year; it will now be doubled in size. We need to encourage more people **later in their careers** in, too; and I hope the **Troops to Teachers** programme sends out a clear signal that can attract more male role models – troops or otherwise – into the primary sector.

- And I think it is quite right that outstanding schools themselves will in future have a much greater role in **teacher training** in the same way that our best hospitals train new doctors.

Great schools also need great **leaders**, and to reach their full potential, those great leaders need the autonomy to do what they judge best.

- A tenth of all secondary schools are now **Academies**, double the number just before the election. I do expect that number to continue to grow. And I hope, too, that more **state boarding schools** will take this route. There are often unique circumstances, I know, with asset ownership, but I have yet to hear of a case where hurdles can't be overcome.
- There is also the potential for **Free Schools**. The media fascination around these has been to do with **parents** setting up schools. I can envisage times when parents might do that – if a local primary is threatened with closure for example – more often I think it will be voluntary organisations and groups of teachers.
- And as a result of Free Schools & Academies *all* schools can benefit from **LEAs** who will need to be more on their toes and demonstrating quality and value for money.
- **Funding streams** in general are being simplified, and I trust that the pages of **missives** arriving on your doormats will be fewer in the next five years than in the last.
- And **OfStEd** inspectors will spend more time in the classroom and focus on key aspects of educational effectiveness, rather than the laundry list of issues they have to consider now.

Too often in this country state education is discussed with **reference only to itself**. The numbers of children getting **5 or more GCSEs** at grade C+ keeps going up, so things must be a lot better, right?

But while the domestic records keep getting smashed, we have been slipping down the **international league tables** – from 8th to 24th in maths, from 7th to 17th in literacy.

The qualifications growing fastest in popularity over recent years are not always the ones being sought or recognised by employers and universities, but those which offer **shortcut ladders** up the school performance **league tables**.

This misleads the student, flatters the system, and does no one any favours beyond the very short term.

- There will be a sharper focus on the most **important aspects of education**. This does not mean that these are the only things that can be taught or covered at school. But I do not think that the concept of an academic core consisting of English, Maths, science, a humanity and a language will be particularly controversial with most people. I also noted from last week's results that state boarding schools already achieve on the English Baccalaureate standard far above the national average.

- Meanwhile **vocational qualifications** will be enhanced too to ensure they measure up to the world's best.

Whilst there are many outstanding schools and teachers working tirelessly for their most challenging pupils, the system as a whole has been letting down those in most need. We have a million young **NEETs**, and famously last year of the 80,000 kids who had been on free school meals, **just 40** got in to Oxford or Cambridge.

- Fundamental to the government's approach is **the pupil premium**. Now schools will have the incentive not just to make a place for children from the poorest backgrounds, but actively seek them out and know that they will be given the resources they need to help them achieve their best.
- But of course it must start much earlier than that. We need to be obsessed with helping children to **read**, because from that so much else flows. The extension of free nursery care for the most disadvantaged 2-year-olds is a very positive step. And I very much welcome the emphasis on early intervention and parenting programmes, and indeed the bi-partisan approach on this in parliament, with the expert involvement of Frank Field, Graham Allen and others.

Indeed this week, on Thursday, we will be having a debate in the Commons, in backbench time but applied for by members from all sides, to consider the implications of the Field report and how to improve life chances for disadvantaged children.

Of course we care about all the children, but I think it is fair to say that it is raising aspirations for the most disadvantaged that most motivates ministers, as it does me.

You and your schools have an outstanding record on both counts. The exam results, the CVA scores, the OfStEd reports, all confirm the same thing. I am very grateful to you for the opportunity to join you here at the conference, and look forward to your questions and comments.

Thank you.