



Rt Hon Ed Balls MP
Secretary of State

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30 June 2009

Dear Colleague,

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 the professionalism and commitment shown by the wider school workforce - 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 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.

The vision of the 21st Century school will need everyone in the workforce to play their part in improving outcomes for pupils, families and the wider community, and will mean a growing role for those in schools who work with teachers, including:

- all staff working to support pupils' learning in the classroom will have, or will be working towards a Level 3 qualification;
- Learning Mentors and Parent Support Advisers being at the forefront of a co-ordinated system of early intervention, linked to other services that enable them to meet the needs and aspirations of every child and young person;
- access to a broader range of professionals to work with school-based staff for example, social services, child and adolescent mental health services and speech and language therapy; and

- the new Support Staff Negotiating Body examining how the increased professionalism of support staff should be most appropriately reflected in their pay and conditions.

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 re-asserts 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;

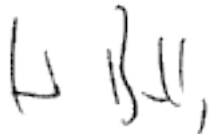
- support for school improvement with all schools working in formal structured partnerships with other schools, colleges, universities, employers, children's services, improvement partners, local Children's Trusts and the wider community; and
- a system of accreditation where new and existing education 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 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.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ed Balls'.

Ed Balls
Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families