

# Operational Sub-Group

## **“The Importance of Teaching” – The Coalition Government’s Education White Paper**

**Item No: 3**

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**Summary**                      This paper provides a summary of the above document and highlights the key implications for local authorities in London.

**Recommendations**      OSG members are asked to note the report.

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### **1      Background and Introduction**

- 1.1    This White Paper, issued on 24<sup>th</sup> November, looks to the long-term and aims to address the UK’s declining educational performance against international comparisons and worsening social mobility. It blends with other recent policies, including:
- 1.1.1    the skills strategy (John Hayes – Joint Minister in DfE & BIS said of the strategy “ We share – along with Michael Gove – a common vision of the value and potential of further education and skills. We believe that, unless they are strong, it will be far harder to build a fairer, more cohesive and more prosperous Britain”);
  - 1.1.2    local growth strategy (localities, led by their councils, should be able to shape skills and apprenticeship provision so that the workforce becomes more competitive);
  - 1.1.3    welfare reform (which, when taken with the commitment to raise participation to 18 by 2015, will affect how young people are treated in the jobs market).

### **2      Headlines**

- 2.1    The White Paper seeks to free schools from “the constraints of central government” and place teachers firmly at the heart of school improvement, raising “the prestige of the teaching profession and...transform the quality of initial training and continuous professional development”. It commits to abolishing “unnecessary duties, processes and requirements” and sets out:

- 2.1.1 powers for teachers to improve discipline and trialling a new approach to exclusions (ending Independent Appeals Panels and local authorities being required to provide alternative provision for excluded pupils);
  - 2.1.2 a “vision for a transformed school curriculum”, with significant changes to assessment and qualifications (reforming A Levels reported as ‘a return to traditional teaching’);
  - 2.1.3 more academies and free schools and a “strong strategic role for local authorities”, with changes to the funding system and “school-led improvements” (leading to a very different role for local authorities - see paragraph 3.2 below);
  - 2.1.4 changes to school performance tables, Ofsted inspections and governance (this makes schools more directly accountable).
- 2.2 The White Paper establishes a vision of “a system in which schools are better able to raise standards, narrow the gap in attainment between rich and poor and enable all young people to stay in education or training until at least the age of 18”.

### 3 Outline of the White Paper

- 3.1 The White Paper is structured around the following:
- 3.1.1 **Teaching and leadership:** Recruiting the best graduates, reforming initial teacher training, introducing new ‘teaching schools’, a fresh purge on bureaucracy (i.e. national targets, Children and Young People’s Plans and Children’s Trusts) and a renewed focus on learner support.
  - 3.1.2 **Behaviour:** Increase the authority of teachers and heads to discipline pupils, with protection from ‘malicious allegations’ and a requirement for local authorities to provide alternative provision.
  - 3.1.3 **Curriculum, assessment and qualifications:** Raising the status of teachers, reviewing the National Curriculum (including the introduction of an English Baccalaureate based on ‘core’ subjects), ensuring exam standards match the best in the world, renewed commitments to the Wolf Review and raising participation to 18 by 2015.
  - 3.1.4 **The new school system:** Increase freedom and autonomy for all schools “while continuing to ensure a level playing field on admissions” (especially for SEN); lowest performing schools (the performance threshold defined in the White Paper has been raised to achieving 35% GCSEs) to be “considered for conversion to become Academies to effect educational transformation”; all schools to be able to become academies and a boost to free schools, collaboration “through Academy chains and multi-school trusts and federations”; give local authorities a strong strategic role “as champions for parents, families and vulnerable pupils... They will promote educational excellence by ensuring a good supply of high quality school places, co-ordinating fair admissions and developing their own school improvement strategies to support local schools.” (See paragraph 3.2 below).
  - 3.1.5 **Accountability:** The White Paper puts great reliance on the supply of information to the public. This includes information about institutions’ finances and their learners’ ‘success’ and destinations that will be presented so that consumers can compare different options. This information will be supported by reforms to Ofsted, so that “inspectors spend more time in the classroom” and a new ‘floor standard’ for primary and secondary schools. Internally, new expectations on governing bodies will accompany freedoms around their structure and form.

- 3.1.6 **School improvement:** End central targets, make clear that schools have responsibility for improvement and end the requirement for every school to have a local authority school improvement partner (SIP), increase the number of National and Local Leaders of Education (head teachers of excellent schools committed to supporting other schools) and develop Teaching Schools to make sure that every school has access to highly effective professional development support. Local authorities to provide “whatever forms of improvement support they choose” - schools below the floor standard receive support, those seriously failing are converted to academies. Encourage local authorities and schools to bring forward applications to the new Education Endowment Fund - there will also be a new collaboration incentive.
- 3.1.7 **School Funding:** Target more resources on the most deprived pupils over the next four years, through a new Pupil Premium (£2.5 billion per year to the end of the CSR round), consult on developing and introducing a clear, transparent and fairer national funding formula to work alongside the Pupil Premium; end the disparity in funding for 16-18 year-olds, so that schools and colleges are funded at the same levels as one another. There is also a confirmation that revised capital arrangements will be put in place. The YPLA will be replaced by an Education Funding Agency (EFA), which will be an executive agency of DfE.

### 3.2 The White Paper and Local Authorities

- 3.2.1 In his statement to Parliament, Michael Gove referred to local authorities as the government’s “indispensable partners” in the drive to improve all schools. The White Paper summarises the role “we will...ensure that local authorities play a new critical role as strengthened champions of choice, securing a wide range of education options for parents and families, ensuring there are sufficient high-quality school places, co-ordinating fair admissions, promoting social justice by supporting vulnerable children and challenging school which fail to improve.” This strategic role is spelt out as follows:
- 3.2.1.1 **Local authorities will have a strong strategic role as champions for parents and families, for vulnerable pupils and of educational excellence:** promoting a “good supply of strong schools”, encouraging the development of academies and free schools, ensuring fair access to all schools for every child, “stand up for” parents and children, support vulnerable pupils (including looked after children, SEN and “those outside mainstream education”), support improvement of underperforming schools or convert them to academies with a strong sponsor, develop their own school improvement strategies and market school improvement services to all schools “not just those in their immediate geographical area”.
- 3.2.1.2 **Local authorities will encourage good schools to expand and encourage free schools or academies to meet demand:** “This will be particularly important in areas of significant demographic growth, where birth rates have risen and there is a particular need for new places. Even in areas where there is not significant demographic growth, we want local authorities to focus on supplying enough good places rather than removing surplus places.”
- 3.2.1.3 **Local authorities will coordinate admissions and ensure fair access to all schools, including academies and free schools:** though there will be no requirement to maintain admissions forums. There will be a separate consultation on a revised Admissions Code.
- 3.2.1.4 **Local authorities will stand up for the interests of parents and children, and promote high standards:** Authorities will be expected

to use data on school performance and act in their residents' best interests, led by the DCS and Lead Member for Children but also engaging, for example, their scrutiny function. If necessary, authorities can inform Ofsted or the Secretary of State of any specific concerns and may have a future commissioning role with new academies/free schools.

**3.2.1.5 Local authorities will act as the champion for vulnerable pupils in their area:** The current responsibilities for SEN, LAC and young people in custody remain. Other responsibilities for safeguarding may change in the light of the Munro Review

**3.2.1.6 Local authorities will move over time to a strategic commissioning role, championing educational excellence:** Authorities will no longer have to provide a SIP to every school or set targets originating from central government. Local authorities are, however, invited to offer support to schools as a traded service, which could be made available outside their own geographic boundaries.

**3.3 Reaction:** The Opposition's immediate response (Andy Burnham MP, Shadow Secretary Of State for Education) was to point to the emphasis on academic qualifications and learning pathways, which he felt unpicked some of the significant steps he believed the previous government had made in moving towards a parity of esteem between vocational and academic routes. He also felt that, beyond working together on improvement initiatives, there was insufficient emphasis on collaboration in the delivery of the curriculum. In his opinion, there were also no proper guarantees that the promised funding increases would reach the disadvantaged young people intended. The DfE website records support from the OECD, National Education Trust and Teach First. Newspapers since 24<sup>th</sup> November have had a mixed opinion and report that schools have an equally mixed view – most support the freedoms they are promised in the White Paper, but there seems to be little enthusiasm for another fundamental change in the curriculum. The NUT refers to the White Paper being “ideologically driven” and counter-productive.

**3.4 Looking Ahead:** Whilst the White Paper is the clearest articulation yet of the coalition's direction, the following outstanding areas will have a bearing on how the sector moves forward:

3.4.1 the Wolf Review of vocational education

3.4.2 The planned SEN Green Paper

3.4.3 a consultation on the Local Authority role in commissioning new schools and overseeing the transition of new management in failing schools, which will also take into account the local authority role as a strategic commissioner when all schools in an area have become academies

3.4.4 consultation on revised inspection arrangements

3.4.5 consultation on new funding formula

## **4 Implications**

**4.1** Having been extensively trailed in the days/weeks preceding the Secretary of State's statement to the House, there were few surprises in the White Paper and while many of the announcements (such as the emphasis on better qualified teachers and qualification reform) were headline grabbing, the following are of greatest interest to local authorities and the RPG:

- 4.1.1 We should not underestimate the changes that local authorities will need to make to the ethos and structure of their Children and Young People Services. When the changes presaged in the White Paper come into effect, the strategic nature of the relationship with schools will need careful managing. Where services are being provided on a pay-back basis, schools will become customers seeking a quality service and value-for-money.
- 4.1.2 Local authorities will need to ensure they maintain good relationships with their schools, relationships that allow the authority to understand and anticipate what the school needs to enable it to meet the needs of its current and future pupils. The RPG will need to consider how it engages with schools, either directly and through London-wide representatives, so that the services it provides to local authorities are directly relevant to front-line teachers and school managers;
- 4.1.3 Local authorities will need to continue to articulate the needs of their community and to remain the authentic voice of parents and learners. This is likely to bring colleagues working in Children's Services directorates in boroughs to work more closely than has traditionally been the case with others in their authority;
- 4.1.4 Local authorities have a unique overview of the local area and how it is likely to change in the future, with different responsibilities for citizens of all ages. This overview represents the distinct value that local authorities bring to the education system of the future. Local authorities will need to ensure that they can develop a compelling vision of their area that engages their schools;
- 4.1.5 There is considerable emphasis on data – its supply, management and interpretation. Authorities at all levels will need to be confident that they have the necessary skills in place to fulfil this aspect of their new role.
- 4.1.6 Despite the loss of the SIP function, there is a role for local authorities in quality improvement that could be developed further. However, it is clear that this will not extend into a power of intervention. It is not clear how local authorities can effect leverage on schools without any mandate to direct governing bodies. Instead, the local authority role is to report concerns to Ofsted and, ultimately, the Secretary of State. This could prove to be a cumbersome process if there are local concerns requiring urgent action or unmet needs that demand prompt attention.

## **5 Recommendations**

- 5.1 The Operational Sub-Group is asked to note this paper.