

Mansion House dinner speech 2019 – Philip Hammond

My Lord Mayor, Excellencies, Lords, distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be back here, in the magnificent setting of the Mansion House.

At least, I think it's a magnificent setting; our Chinese guests on Monday thought it was a magnificent setting. But apparently Sir John Summerson, a prominent architectural historian, described it as "a striking reminder that good taste was not a universal attribute in the 18th century!"

Probably says more about architectural historians than it says about this building!

This evening, inevitably, has a slightly retrospective tinge to it: This will be Mark Carney's final Mansion House speech before at last being allowed to retire as Governor of the Bank of England (I've headed him off twice on his previous attempts!).

And I want to thank him, on behalf of everyone here, for his six years of superb leadership in that role. Mark, thank you for your service.

And for me, too, there is now just a hint of uncertainty as to what the future may hold. And that's a good enough excuse for a moment of self-indulgent retrospection.

But whatever my future is, I can promise you I won't be doing it from an overpriced garden shed on wheels!

The world has changed over the last nine years...

...but the values and beliefs that we applied to the challenges we inherited in 2010 endure...

...and are just as relevant to the ones we will face in 2020.

A belief in Britain as an open, tolerant, outward-looking nation at ease in the world.

A belief in the market economy as the best way to deliver prosperity for all our people – but a belief, too, that that model must evolve and adapt to a changing world.

A belief in the power of enterprise – that the true strength of our economy and society lies in the innovators, the entrepreneurs, and the self-starters who take risks and drive growth.

A belief in a pragmatic politics that is open to compromise and that deals with the world as it is, not as we might wish it to be.

[Political content removed]

That a paramount duty of Government is to ensure Britain's prosperity through the market economy and the prudent management of our public finances.

And that our four nations are more prosperous and successful when we act as one United Kingdom, working together towards common goals, based on the unique bond and shared values that have developed over centuries.

[Political content removed]

Nine years ago, I stepped into the Cabinet Room for the first time – part of a team that faced the daunting challenge of rebuilding our economy and our public finances after the shock of the 2008 crash.

We have made significant progress...

...but the journey has not been easy: of the 23 full members of today's Cabinet, only three have served continuously since May 2010.

It is taking years for the full impacts of the crash to be felt.

So, while it is true that, ten years on...

... the economy has recovered...

...and we have fixed the public finances...

... some of the tensions that were exposed by the crash and its aftermath contributed to the Referendum shock in 2016 and the drift away from "politics-as-usual" since then.

In short, while we have repaired the public finances and re-booted our economy, we have not yet repaired our society and our politics.

My approach to Brexit has been shaped by the simple observation that no one, however passionate their views on Europe, voted to be poorer – so a successful Brexit in the eyes of the electorate must be a Brexit that protects Jobs, Businesses and living standards.

So, the next Prime Minister will need to complete the post-crash recovery process...

...by rebuilding confidence in our democratic politics and our market economy...

...demonstrating that it is capable of delivering an economy that works for everyone...

...where competition delivers for consumers...

...where businesses are sustainable and reflect the values of the next

generation...

...and where productivity-enhancing technology delivers better jobs and real wage rises for workers...

...as well as profits for investors.

[Political content removed]

But I am an eternal optimist – so I reiterate that call tonight.

Because it doesn't mean that there would be no extra money to spend.

As I said at the Spring Statement, if we leave the EU in a smooth and orderly way, the fiscal headroom I have built up means an incoming Prime Minister will have scope for additional spending or tax cuts.

But there is a caveat: a damaging 'No Deal' Brexit would cause short-term disruption to our economy, soaking-up all the fiscal headroom we have built, and more...

...and while fiscal and monetary policy interventions could help to smooth our path to a post-No Deal Brexit economy, both could only be temporary...

...and neither could prevent the economy being permanently smaller, than if we leave with a Deal.

So, there is a choice: either we leave with No Deal...

...or we preserve our future fiscal space – we cannot do both.

The truth is, despite my somewhat hawkish reputation, I signalled in 2016 a more balanced approach, recognising the need to invest in our future, support our public services and keep taxes down – as well as controlling the deficit and starting to reduce the debt.

As the public finances have improved, I have committed over £150bn of new spending in the last 3 years...

...including an NHS settlement which is the single largest commitment ever made by a peacetime British Government.

Public capital investment is set to reach the highest sustained level in forty years...

...as we build the critical national infrastructure we need to raise our productivity;

I've committed £44bn to housing, delivering more new homes last year than in all but one of the last 30 years;

And I've cut taxes, with over 30 million people seeing their income tax cut this year;

288,000 people benefitting so far from the abolition of stamp duty for first time buyers;

And British businesses paying the lowest corporation tax rate in the G20.

All while seeing our national debt falling sustainably for the first time in a generation...

...and the employment rate at a record high and unemployment at a 40-year low.

[Political content removed]

Yet one thing is clear: whatever happens with Brexit, financial services will remain one of our largest and most important industries.

Ten years on from the crisis, and in the midst of the Brexit debate, we need to articulate a vision for the future of our Financial Services industry and a plan for delivering it that will boost London's position as the world's leading international financial centre.

This sector has travelled a long way since the crisis, with wholesale reform of prudential and conduct regulation; higher capital requirements; and more robust resolution regimes.

But now it is overshadowed by Brexit.

We know that we must resolve our future relationship with the EU for our FS businesses to thrive.

The financial services industry was the first to make the case for a transition period...

...and it was the first to move, decisively, to prepare for the risk of "No Deal".

Government has responded – through our temporary permission regimes; the technical dialogues between the Bank of England and the ECB; and the onshoring of EU regulation.

And the Political Declaration jointly committed to an outline future FS relationship which avoids falling back on existing, largely untested, equivalence regimes.

But, important as Brexit is, it is a short-term challenge – and we cannot allow it to distract our gaze from the structural changes that will shape the future.

The single market did not create the city of London.

As I said here last year, the balance of the UK's FS trade will inevitably shift, as we continue to do business with the EU, but with future growth increasingly coming from the dynamic emerging markets beyond Europe.

London's position as the premier global financial services hub depends on our

ability to capture a share of these booming markets.

And it depends, too, on our ability to integrate the technologies of the future into our mainstream financial services.

In short, to remain a dominant player we in the UK must do what London's markets have always done: evolve. Refuse to stand still; reject the notion of the status quo; embrace change, disruption and challenge. Adopt, adapt and synergise enthusiastically and energetically. Radiate the energy and dynamism which distinguishes a real hub of innovation from its sterile imitators.

And we have a plan to do so, building on our long traditions of innovation, resilience, agility and openness to create a platform for the future.

We are seeing, all around us, unprecedented FS innovation.

As new businesses dismantle distribution chains, create new ways to serve the market, and meet demands that did not even exist a few short months ago.

The UK's Pro-business policies and the most innovative regulatory environment in the world have created the conditions for innovators and disruptors to thrive.

But as the first wave of FinTech innovation matures, we must now evolve our policy and regulation too, to make sure it remains fit for purpose.

So, I can announce this evening a Treasury-led review of the payments landscape bringing together policymakers and regulators to make sure that our regulation and infrastructure keeps pace with the dizzying array of new payments models.

And we will use the Government's "Smart Data Function", working with the FCA and Treasury, to build on the fantastic success of our Open Banking initiative with a new agenda for Open Finance – giving small businesses, as well as consumers, power over all of their financial data, so that SMEs will have access to financial tools hitherto only accessible to larger corporates.

At the same time, we must maintain our reputation not only as one of the most dynamic and innovative places to do business – but one of the most resilient too.

So the second step in our plan is to launch a major, long-term review into the future of our regulatory framework.

This review will deliver a regulatory system that continues to enable, rather than stifle, innovation...

...that protects consumers...

...maintains the highest possible standards...

...is proportionate and policed by independent regulators...

...and that recognises that the EU will continue to be one of our major trading partners...

...even as it lays the groundwork for the more global nature of our future financial services industry.

I have heard the message from business that there is a critical need for greater “air traffic control” to manage the cumulative impact of regulatory change emanating from different sources.

So, as we wait for the future relationship with the EU to be clear, the first phase of this review will take action to improve coordination between the regulatory authorities – starting with a summit of all the relevant regulators at Noll in a few weeks’ time, leading to a Treasury call for evidence before the summer.

We recognise that global challenges need a global response.

So, we will maintain our ambition to be the most open and outward-facing financial services market in the world.

Last year, I set out our plans for Global Financial Partnerships;

On Monday, I launched the new London-Shanghai Stock Connect – and Huatai, the first issuer, raised US\$1.54 billion, showing the phenomenal potential of this kind of cross-listing mechanism;

And tonight, I can announce the issuance of a second Sovereign Sukuk by the UK.

As well as openness to new business channels – we must also be open to international talent.

We’re embarked on an unprecedented year-long consultation on the post-Brexit migration regime, and I urge this industry to use this opportunity to make the case for a regime that meets the needs of its businesses.

And we’re shoring up our domestic skills regime too – and I welcome the interim report, published today, of the FS Skills Taskforce, ably led by Mark Hoban and CityUK.

Openness also means showing leadership on a global scale, as we use our deep capital markets and FS expertise to help meet the great strategic challenges of the 21st century.

As a first step, we’ve launched the new Impact Investment Institute, aiming to channel more money towards social challenges, as well as seeking a financial return.

The financial services sector will play a critical role in addressing the challenges of ageing populations.

But the biggest challenge of all will be mobilising financial markets in

support of this Government's commitment to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

The people in this room, and the institutions you represent, will be key to that effort...

...as we show that the immense power of this industry can be harnessed as a force for good; a key part of the solution to the world's problems.

As I contemplate the past nine years, there is much that we can be proud of. We defied the doom-mongers: Our economy and our public finances have been painstakingly rebuilt; our banking system has been recapitalised and made safe; our employment levels are at a record high, with wages, too, now growing sustainably.

But our politics is not in such good shape.

As we look ahead to a new set of challenges today it would be easy to be despondent about the divisions in our country.

But those divisions will heal...

...and as we look to the future, there is much about our country to inspire us.

Our institutions are strong and enduring;

Our legal system and our language dominate the world's commerce;

Our great universities and research institutes are generating world-beating IP;

Our entrepreneurs, our innovators, and our creators continue to punch way above our weight.

And in many of the cutting-edge technologies of tomorrow, world-class British companies lead the way.

[Political content removed]

We can look ahead to a brighter future for our economy, our politics, our society and our country.

Financial services – one of Britain's biggest industries...

...but also a critical enabler for change...

...has a vital role to play.

I know you will rise to the challenge.

And I wish you all, all the very best for the future.

Thank you.

Middle East Peace Process: Call to reduce the risk of violence

Thank you Mr President. Before I start on the Middle East, could I just say how sorry we were about the terrorist attack on 16 June in Nigeria near Maiduguri which killed at least 30 people. And I think the Council press statement has just issued on that, which is welcome. But our sympathies and condolences to those affected and to Nigeria.

Turning to the Middle East, Mr President. Thank you Mr Mladenov for your briefing. I think some common themes are emerging. For the United Kingdom, we share the Secretary-General's views on the expansion of Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank including East Jerusalem. It was disappointing that on 30 May the Israeli authorities published tenders for the construction of over 500 settlement units in East Jerusalem. And that's a decision that we condemn Mr President.

As others have pointed out the continued escalation of settlement activity in the West Bank and East Jerusalem is contrary to international law as reaffirmed by Resolution 2334. An annexation of any part of the West Bank would also be contrary to international law – not to mention destructive to peace efforts. And I just wanted to set that out clearly.

Turning to Gaza, the United Kingdom condemns the rocket attack by Palestinian militants against southern Israel on 13 June. We strongly condemn all acts of terrorism and we call upon Hamas and other terrorist groups to put a permanent end to their incitement and rocket fire against Israel. We were saddened by reports of a Palestinian medic who succumbed to wounds received last month – when he was hit in the face by a rubber coated bullet at the Gaza periphery. It's very hard to comprehend, Mr President, the killing of those delivering medical services.

So we'd like to take this opportunity once more to urge all parties concerned to take action to reduce the risk of violence and to make renewed progress towards a long term agreement. It is only through a long term political solution, bringing the Palestinian Authority back to Gaza that communities in Israel and Gaza can be free from the threat of violence.

In response to the fragile humanitarian situation, on 29 May the United Kingdom announced a \$2 million package of support for the World Health Organisation. This is to help address the gap in trauma and emergency care in Gaza and will help establish a new limb reconstruction unit. We hope that this package of support will relieve the pressure on Gaza's hard-pressed health services.

I want to turn if I may to the altercations on Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount on 2 June. Given the religious importance and the political sensitivity of

the holy sites, we look to all parties to maintain the status quo and engage in dialogue to assume a calm, especially during religious observances such as the holy month of Ramadan.

Turning to a solution to the conflict, Mr President, along with other member states the United Kingdom continues to promote a just resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in line with relevant UN Security Council resolutions. It is our understanding and it seems that the understanding is shared by most Council members that sustainable peace requires: a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state, based on 1967 borders with agreed land swaps with Jerusalem as the shared capital of both states and a just, fair, agreed and realistic settlement for refugees. There need to be security arrangements, that for Israelis: prevent any resurgence of terrorism and for Palestinians: respect the sovereignty ensure freedom of movement and demonstrate that the occupation is over. To this end, Mr President I'd like to take the opportunity to encourage our US colleagues to bring forward detailed proposals for a viable Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement that addresses the legitimate concerns of both parties. We continue to believe that the only way to achieve this is through substantive peace talks leading to a two-state solution.

Mr President there will be a meeting in Bahrain next week about the economic situation and proposals. This is welcome. More needs to be done to enable the Palestinians to trade freely with the rest of the world. This in turn requires greater movement of goods and people and the easing of Israeli restrictions. Ultimately in order for the Palestinian economy to flourish, a political solution to the conflict needs to be found.

Lastly, Mr President, others have mentioned UNWRA. And I would like to reiterate that the United Kingdom also remains a committed supporter of UNWRA and of Palestinian refugees across the Middle East. We welcome UNWRA's efforts to broaden its donor base. And I'd like to encourage others to step up with more funding and more predictable disbursements. In this context, Mr President, we look forward to a successful pledging conference here in New York next week.

Thank you.

Syria: A situation that is accelerating and it's exponential

Thank you very much Mr President. Thank you to both Under-Secretary's-General for that briefing. And through you, can I also pay tribute and thank all UN personnel on the ground in Syria and neighbouring countries, all humanitarian workers who are risking their lives to try and make the situation better for the ordinary people of Idlib and of Syria.

Mr President, I agree very much with a lot of what my colleagues have said today so I won't repeat it. Thank you to you, Germany and Belgium, for insisting on this session which is much needed. I won't go into the political process because the French Ambassador has said everything I would have said. So on this occasion he speaks for the United Kingdom also.

I wanted to start, if I may, with the situation against the Turkish observation posts and personnel in Idlib. They have been targeted by Syrian Regime shelling. I look forward to what our Turkish colleague can tell us later about that. But I just want to recall that Turkey has been one of the countries trying to help resolve the situation in Idlib. And the reward they get for that is to have their personnel fired upon. That's not just a sad commentary, Mr President, on the state of affairs in Syria, it's an absolute inversion of Member States' responsibility to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security. And as the Under-Secretary General said, the damage that is being done to Idlib and its civilians far outstrips any degradation or necessity in respect of terrorist forces like HTS and I think she referred to a pointless stalemate and that's exactly what it is, Mr President. People are being killed but no advantage is being gained at all militarily. And other speakers have drawn attention to the fact that there is no military solution. I agree very much with my American colleague on that. So, along with the Polish representative, I want to call this out as a clear violation of the Sochi Agreement and to call for all parties to respect that Agreement and go back to the ceasefire. In fact, I have to say Mr President I find it incredible. President Putin agreed the Sochi agreement with President Erdogan. Why, therefore the Russian Federation cannot persuade the Syrian authorities to follow it – it's a mystery to all of us. But again it's an inversion of what ought to be happening. And I hope that when Special Envoy Lavrentiev and Deputy Foreign Minister Vershinin go to Syria this week, they will be able to press the Syrian authorities on this. And they will be able to have success.

Like other speakers, Mr President, I'd like to turn also to the situation against IHL and the situation of the bombing of the hospitals. This is a situation that is accelerating and it's exponential. And I look forward to what OCHA can tell us next week after their briefing. But in the meantime I'd like to hear some answers from the Russian and the Syrian Representatives here today. And I keep asking these questions, Mr President. I keep not getting answers but I'm going to carry on asking them because they're absolutely critical. And if people believe, as we'll hear later today, from both Representatives that they want to resolve this conflict – then they do need to begin to address these questions. So my first question is: are the attacks on hospitals deliberate? If they are deliberate, then I would be grateful for an explanation as to how such attacks meet the IHL core principles of distinction, necessity and proportionality.

And I'd also be grateful, Mr President, to know why no warning was given to the hospitals? Because under Article 19 of the Fourth Geneva Convention – the protection to which civilian hospitals are entitled shall not cease unless they used [outside their humanitarian duties] to commit acts harmful to the enemy. But the critical clause is: protection however may cease only after

due warning has been given. Naming [in all appropriate cases] a reasonable time limit [and after such warning has remained unheeded]. So I would like to know, Mr President, if those warnings were given and if time limits were set and if not, why not? If, on the other hand the attacks on the hospitals are not deliberate, what steps are being taken by the Syrian and Russian authorities to avoid such attacks in future? What are the weaknesses in their deconfliction systems that are allowing the attacks to happen?

And my last question, Mr President, would be please can we know which units from both the Syrian military and the Russian military are involved in these attacks? I think that would be a very helpful piece of transparency for the Council to have. We, for the UK's part, will continue to provide significant humanitarian assistance to help keep people alive. But there's no doubt that restoring a ceasefire and ensuring that all parties respect it is actually the critical thing that needs to happen. And that is the thing, not the humanitarian assistance, that will make the biggest difference to the people in Idlib.

Two points on looking ahead, Mr President. I very much share what the French Representative said about reconstruction and elections. We provide humanitarian assistance. We will not provide reconstruction assistance. We will not be able to contribute to the eventual rehabilitation of Syria into the world community of nations – without a viable and meaningful and sustainable political process. And my last point, Mr President, again like France, will be to reiterate that if chemical weapons are used again against the civilians in Syria, we will join our colleagues in responding swiftly and appropriately.

Thank you.

Right of Reply by Mark Power, First Secretary, at the Security Council briefing on the situation in Idlib, Syria

Thank you Mr President. My Ambassador has just asked me to take the floor – and she apologises that she had to leave the meeting – just to make a couple of final points on the substance of the issue today as opposed to some of the extraneous points that were brought in by some of the speakers. And those were going back to the strikes on the hospitals.

The Russian Ambassador asked us a question which was what the difference was between the hospitals that were attacked in the Syrian Government-controlled territory versus those that were attacked in rebel-held territory. And the difference is that in Idlib in the rebel-held territory, the Russians were supplied with the information about those medical facilities through the deconstruction mechanism we have been discussing today.

So the question remains – as was asked by my Ambassador – how it comes about that those hospitals and medical facilities have found themselves under attack – remains a legitimate one. And we further find it slightly astonishing that the Russian Ambassador was surprised that the number of hospitals had increased? During a civil war we think that this is a natural consequence of the attacks that have been taking place on civilians and

therefore the reason why the mechanism was created in the first place. So to reiterate the point: we will answer our questions but will they answer questions that we have posed to them.

Thank you.

Landmark resolution on Persons with Disabilities in Armed Conflict

Thank you, Mr President. As co-penholder the United Kingdom would like to echo the words of the Polish Representative, Ambassador Joanna, and thank Council members for their constructive and thoughtful contributions during the negotiation process. The UK would like to express special thanks to the Polish delegation for their commitment in this joint endeavour. Poland's initiative last year to host the Arria Formula meeting on the issue has proven to be decisive in focusing the collective attention of this Council.

I also thank Russia and China for voting for this Resolution despite the doubts they expressed today. I agree with my Russian colleague and friend that we shouldn't be creating new legal obligations and we've been careful not to do so. And we agree that all citizens and civilians should be protected and we also agree that this should not just be declaratory and that there should be concrete actions and indeed there are in this Resolution.

Mr President, empowering people with disabilities leads to better decisions and more effective outcomes for communities, for nations and for the world. This Resolution is a vital first step in the Council's role in mitigating and better understanding the disproportionate impact that conflict has on persons with disabilities.

As we heard from the inspirational Syrian Nujeen Mustafa earlier this year, active participation is essential to improving the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of armed conflict as well as in humanitarian response plans and post-conflict recovery. This Resolution offers a clear statement that persons with disabilities want to, can and must participate and lead decisions which affect their lives. It recognises the protection needs of all affected civilian populations and calls for safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access to all people in need of assistance.

We look forward to increased information and recommendations from the Secretary-General in both thematic and geographic Security Council reports. Along with the inclusion of data disaggregated by disability, this will further improve the evidence-based approach that we want all to take to the Council's decision making.

Mr President, this landmark Resolution is recognition that there should be

nothing about us, without us and we hope that the actions agreed start the process of answering that call.

Thank you Mr President.

Amanda Spielman at the Wellington Festival of Education

Good afternoon and thank you for inviting me once again to address this splendid festival. And I'm grateful too for the final slot of the day, after Lord Agnew, when I know I am pretty much guaranteed a good turnout!

Two years ago, I made my first speech at Wellington as Chief Inspector. From the beginning I was clear in my ambition for Ofsted and the direction I wanted us to take, during my tenure.

Taking on this role is a bit like taking on the role of Doctor Who. Each regenerated Chief Inspector has the same broad aim in mind, but we do have different ways of going about it. And it's worth noting that there are now women in both roles. I'll leave this thought with you, we've never been seen in the same place.

Back in 2017, I set out my priorities for Ofsted in my speech here.

I said that I wanted Ofsted to be seen as a force for improvement. I said that I wanted us to add real value to the education landscape, through our research work as well as through inspection, and to that end, I intended to strengthen our research function.

I said that I wanted us to focus on the curriculum, the substance of education. And I spoke about British values and the importance of schools bringing those values to life for the children who pass through their gates.

Now, two years on and at my half-way point, I want to reflect on the progress we have made and how we've been able both to contribute to and shape the debate around education issues. I would then like to consider some future challenges for our schools and young people, and how we collectively might evolve to meet them.

First then

How is Ofsted a force for improvement and what does improvement look like?

As the education inspectorate we're rarely loved, I'm not sure that any inspectorate is. It is our role to judge and to publish those judgements for

all to see. There are those in the education world, and I'm sure in this room, who don't like it: but we remain the arbiter of quality in state education.

The four-point grading scale may not always find favour with schools, but it is proven, and it works. By that I mean it is readily understood by parents, it's workable (even allowing for the individuality of our inspectors) and it's seen as a best-practice model for inspectorates. The police and fire inspectorate, the probation inspectorate and the Care Quality Commission are three of the inspectorates who assign the same grades as we do: outstanding, good, requires improvement and inadequate.

In our most recent parent survey, nine out of ten parents knew the grade of their child's school, college, nursery or childminder. That's quite a statistic.

Another impressive figure is the proportion of schools that are now rated as good or outstanding. Our most recent data tells us that 85% of all schools have reached that standard. That's a great testimony to the efforts made by everyone who works in schools across the country.

But it's only right to acknowledge that this success comes with caveats. As you will all know, current legislation doesn't allow us to inspect outstanding schools routinely.

That is undeniably problematic for us, for parents and for the schools themselves. Without some regular scrutiny, it's impossible to say whether an outstanding school is still hitting the same heights. And we know that when we do go back into outstanding schools, we often find that they are doing less well, even allowing for the fact that we are not visiting a random sample of outstanding schools.

This academic year, we have inspected more than 300 outstanding primary and secondary schools, about 8 per cent of the total number. Only 1 in 6 retained the top grade. That's concerning.

As we move into our new inspection regime it's only fair that we are able to test all schools against the same benchmark. It's certainly something that we're discussing with government.

So at one level, inspection itself, I think we have continued to be a force for improvement. But bald statistics are just one way of demonstrating progress. There are other ways we can make a positive impact.

Research

Our research function plays a couple of critical roles for us.

First, it allows us to add real value across education and social care. Cross-cutting research allows us to combine what we learn through inspections with new insight and fresh thinking.

For example, this year, we published our own research into knife crime in the context of London schools. The timing couldn't have been more tragically apposite. There have been over 30 fatal stabbings in London alone this year. And quite a number of the victims have been of school age.

As the media covered horrific cases, from the gang-related to the seemingly random, there has been demand from the public and politicians for something meaningful to be done.

In among many sensible suggestions, there was a worrying narrative that started to emerge around exclusions.

It is the sad truth, that there are children in schools, particularly those living difficult or chaotic lives, who are involved with gangs in their neighbourhoods. When these children are excluded, they take these gang connections with them into the next stage of their schooling. However, it started to become common currency that excluded children were turning to, or being turned on, to a gang lifestyle only after they were excluded.

As is often the case, this became caught up in the desire for a simple solution. A soundbite solution, that there should be no more exclusions. That we should turn off the tap for the gang recruiters, no longer send children to pupil referral units where they can be preyed on by the drug dealers and gang leaders.

Except that doesn't tally with what we see. Many PRUs are doing great work in very difficult circumstances. In some cases, they are turning young lives around and preparing young people not for a life of crime, but for a new chance to contribute and thrive.

And it's far better to be schooled in a PRU which is registered and inspected than end up in some of the poor examples of unregistered alternative provision that we highlighted earlier this year. Many of these places offer little in terms of education or support, many have serious health and safety issues and we estimate that as many as 6,000 children may be out of sight in unregistered, or illegal schools. Pupil Referral Units really are a much better bet for the children who might otherwise slip through the net of education.

I'm a realist though – and we know that the life chances for young people who are excluded are often limited, compared to those who remain in school. Exclusion should be a last resort, though it must be available to headteachers in extremis. Nobody should ever be a cheerleader for exclusion, but sometimes it's the only way to manage persistently unacceptable behaviour that threatens the education, or the safety of classmates. It must remain on the table.

Our [knife crime research](#) found no clear causal link between exclusion and knife crime. So we spoke out against the neat soundbites and we pressed local authorities, the police and other partners to include schools more readily in their existing partnerships to tackle knife crime and other kinds of serious youth violence. It wasn't radical thinking and it wasn't a silver bullet, but

it was based on our research and on evidence.

A second role that our research function plays, is the gathering of [intelligence and insight to underpin the development of our inspection model](#). The curriculum research we carried out ahead of crafting the [new inspection framework](#), was crucial.

It underlined why we were right to concentrate on the curriculum in our thinking. We saw that, even in some very good schools, which were scoring well at inspection, something was getting lost in terms of the curriculum.

We saw that years of over-emphasis on exam performance by a number of agencies, including Ofsted, were having a corrosive effect in some classrooms. This focus on performance had the unintended and unwanted effect of curricula being narrowed across the age groups.

For example, at key stage two, we saw the depressing impact of teaching to the test. Some primary schools are spending a disproportionate amount of time on maths and English, to the detriment of science – and indeed other humanities, arts and practical subjects, which were often lumped into rather nebulous topic work. That's not good preparation for life in year seven, when children should be ready to enjoy a wider menu of lessons – and have opportunities to tackle new challenges and wrestle with new ideas.

And all that for the SATs, which are fundamentally for the benefit of the school. I have nothing against the SATs per se, as tests they serve a purpose. But, as I have said before: it's wrong and unnecessary to ratchet up the pressure on young children as they approach them, when they ought to barely register they are being tested at all. And it's certainly a great waste of children's last year in primary school, if their curriculum experience is mostly limited to two subjects.

So the first challenge for us was to recognise the part we had played in creating this unwanted culture and to see what could be done to put the curriculum back at the heart of education. And the second challenge was to do that without undermining or reversing the very many improvements that we have seen over recent years. We really wanted to bring about a positive change carefully and responsibly. I hope we have succeeded.

Curriculum

Which brings me on to the curriculum and the changes we're making to the inspection framework.

I have spoken many times in recent months about the framework and what it means, so I don't want to talk about the nuts and bolts of it here. For those of you who hanker for detail, my colleagues Sean Harford, Matthew Purves and Paul Joyce will be speaking here tomorrow afternoon, so please do go along.

This is a good moment to stop and thank everyone, individuals and organisations, who has helped develop this new inspection model. Many thousands have contributed to a process that really has drawn on the full

spectrum of expertise and insight from every quarter, and has helped to make this framework strong and valuable to parents and schools (and of course all other kinds of education provider) alike. For myself and all my colleagues, I can say that this has been an enriching experience.

But this afternoon, I would rather reflect on the shift that has happened since we started to talk meaningfully about the curriculum.

Three years ago, education discussions tended to linger not on what was taught, but on how it was taught. Debates on pedagogy raged, and for many, where you stood on the traditionalist or progressive debate defined your character forever more.

Now though, the curriculum is the hot topic. There are any number of sessions here at Wellington discussing what a strong curriculum should look like. And that reflects many discussions that are going on across education publications and online as well as in schools. And rather than seeing the curriculum focus as a challenge, it seems that many school leaders and teachers alike are energised by the opportunity to think harder about what they teach as well as how they teach it.

I see that as an example of the soft power that Ofsted undoubtedly wields. Inspection is often seen, wrongly in our view, as something of a big stick. But, incorrect or not, the perception that you carry a big stick, as Roosevelt observed, does mean people will listen to you.

Above everything else we have achieved over the past few years, prompting a resurgence of interest in a strong curriculum and a rigorous debate about what children should learn, has been the most satisfying. And I hope it will have a lasting impact on education and on the lives of the children who are currently passing through school.

British values

I also talked about British values in my 2017 speech, about the importance of embedding them within the wider curriculum. And I spoke about the need for a true civic education. Both of those remain just as true today. It's so important that all these values are taught, understood and lived. None of them is an easy concept for young people to grasp, and none of them is as universally recognised as we might like to think. They don't just rub off on children without ever being taught. School is how and where we make sure that every young British citizen ends up with the same level of understanding.

I'm not going to put you on the spot and ask you to tell me the four British values that are particularly referenced by DfE: instead I'll remind you that they are: democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. And they are each being tested by a combination of events and social changes.

While I am not one of the siren voices claiming that democracy is under some sort of existential threat, it's true to say that it's not in rude health at present.

The rule of law does remain a clear bedrock for society at large. However, equality law is clearly coming under strain, especially where some of the different rights that we value and protect in law bump into each other.

I have spoken recently about the protests at some primary schools over the teaching of relationships education that includes some recognition of same sex relationships. I have been very clear that the laws of the land don't allow us to pick and choose which protected characteristic under the Equality Act we actually want to protect.

We are a highly diverse country. We place equal legal value on the rights of women, equality of opportunity for people with disabilities, and on respect for people of different race, religion, or sexual orientation.

There is no hierarchy in the legislation, but with so many deeply entrenched positions there can be a tendency for 'cause wars', as in 'all characteristics may be equal, but my characteristic is more equal than others'. Different groups often view the concept of tolerance and respect through their own particular lens.

Within schools, we're starting to see how damaging it can be to have this sort of self-determination of what 'acceptable', 'tolerant' and 'respectful' looks like. It thwarts attempts to reach the kind of consensus between schools and parents that is so important.

More generally, in education we often talk about preparing young people for life in modern Britain. We certainly use the phrase a good deal at Ofsted. It runs through a lot of what we're about as an organisation because it neatly encapsulates one of the important roles of education.

Because education is about a lot of things: it's about the acquisition of knowledge, for its own sake, it's about the broadening of horizons through that knowledge, it's about the development of the skills needed to make a success of adult life, it's also about socialisation, encouraging harmony between different people, and it's about the advancement of civilisation.

Education pioneers across the world knew this as they began to formalise state education systems. The founders of the common school movement in the United States in the 19th century wanted to mould fine upstanding citizens of the Republic, as much as they wanted to instil knowledge and a habit of reading and learning. Preparing children for life in 19th century America, if you will.

More recently, conversations with our Ofsted counterparts from France, Sweden and the Netherlands have showed us how the same debates are echoed in other countries.

So it's important to have this sort of wider thinking in mind, when considering what preparing young people for life in modern Britain really means.

The phrase is often used about the role of schools in teaching children to respect people who may be different from them.

That is certainly part of the aim, but it would be wrong to narrow the work down to a discussion about equalities, or even about wider British Values.

We need to consider the influences and interactions that Britain and the wider world bring to bear on a modern child.

The range of influences on children has changed out of all recognition in the last couple of generations. Children's consumption of information is very different, and the context provided by the world around them is different too.

Starting with the last point: in recent years we have watched the fragmentation of the traditional political tribes, not just here, but across the world. We have seen the rise of single-issue campaigns and campaigners.

Looking at the world through a single lens can lead us to lose sight of the bigger picture. Complexity is shunned and political discourse narrows and becomes more polarised.

Of course, simplicity is not of itself a bad thing. Simple narratives are the gold standard in politics, they help connect otherwise disengaged voters with the complicated world of statecraft. They achieve cut through and there are some parallels here with teaching: making the complex understandable and bringing dry facts to life.

But what we increasingly see is not a simple narrative, but a simplistic one that isn't good for anyone. A narrative in which the world's problems have a single, neat solution, where scapegoats abound and critics are seen as the enemy, to be discredited, discounted or disowned.

There is an anti-education narrative in this as well. 'The elites can't be trusted. The educated may have learned a lot in their ivory towers and among their dreaming spires, but they'll never understand the real world.'

Narrowing and polarising is happening on many fronts. We see universities coming under pressure to withdraw invitations to speakers that the student body decides it cannot abide.

And pressure groups are not always political in the traditional sense. Recently there have been at least two instances where schools have faced fierce protests from animal rights and vegan protestors, for raising animals on school grounds and encouraging the children to learn about, and be involved in, their care. The objectors were outraged because those animals would in time be slaughtered to provide meat for the school canteen.

It's relatively easy in the modern world to build a considerable head of steam from a single-issue campaign. The ubiquity of social media, makes it a matter of a few clicks to sign up to the latest cause, add your name to a rapidly-growing petition, or spread the word about the next protest march.

In education, there are often sophisticated campaigns that seek to add topics to the curriculum and quickly garner support. The media is awash with stories inspired by these campaigns and the list of things that schools 'really must

cover' grows: sleep lessons, farming, first aid, online relationships, sign language and gardening are among the list of suggestions in recent months.

I'm certainly not saying that these ideas lack merit, but they highlight a wider point about the role of schools. It's something we have raised concerns about.

The role of schools

For every new responsibility that gets loaded on to schools, something has to give. Curriculum planning is a challenging job and we are encouraging schools to strike the right balance between different subjects. Adding the latest hot topic can result in a trade off, something with potentially wider merit for young people being squeezed out. Schools have a finite amount of time to educate and so what we demand of them must be manageable.

We had calls from a number of campaign groups to add additional checks into the inspection framework. Again, many of them sounded perfectly reasonable, until you stop to think about the practicalities and the kinds of specialist expertise that would be required to do them justice. Not to mention what a long list of new checks would do to the time it takes to carry out an inspection.

And we are already accustomed to balancing many expectations within inspection. But we don't come under as much pressure as some schools. We know that some schools have had campaigners intimidating them to prevent certain lessons from being taught or to bring about changes in schools, and leaning on parents to give the impression of a united front, in order to close down debate. That cannot be allowed to stand.

In our pluralistic society, we are seeing a worrying trend towards an intolerance of different opinions and attitudes. And what characterises this new single-issue reality, is confrontation. If you fervently believe in one simplistic answer to all the world's problems, then it follows that all other solutions and actions are wrong. Debate is shouted down.

And nowhere is it shouted down more, than on social media.

For many years, when we have discussed the need to prepare children for life in a digital world, we have focused on developing the skills required by a modern, digital workforce. In more recent times, as the darker side of the online world has started to affect young people in terrible ways, through bullying, grooming or child abuse, there has rightly been an increasing effort to educate children about online safety.

But there's more to equipping children for their online life than teaching them how to avoid the predators and the dangers that undoubtedly exist. In an online world that mirrors and reinforces the simplistic narratives and aggressive campaigning that we see elsewhere, there is a need for intellectual rigour and knowledge too.

It's no exaggeration to say that young people now grow up online. In 2017,

Ofcom reported that half of all 11 and 12 years olds had a social media profile, despite the minimum age on all major platforms being 13. And 2017 was two years ago, a long time when you consider that Facebook and Twitter are barely teenagers themselves.

Some studies suggest that children are very good at spotting 'fake news' and are more inherently untrusting of online sources of information than some older people. But 'fake news', of the malevolent foreign government variety, is just part of a wider issue.

As children grow up they are influenced above all else by their friends and peers. And that is true online. They see what their friends share with them, both of themselves and of the wider world. To a great extent, their online lives are curated for them by their friends, creating an echo chamber. This is reinforced by the algorithms of social media platforms, directing advertising and content that is likely to chime with their existing likes and opinions.

Knowledge is the answer

What is taught in schools takes on even more importance if the wider influences on young people are too often simplistic, over curated or fake. It's an important answer to those who say that school classrooms are not the right place for children to learn about same-sex relationships. Parents may want to shelter their children from the truths, half-truths and lies that exist in the wider world, but the same will not always be true of their peers. Isn't it better to learn about the world from a reputable teacher, than from their friends in school playgrounds, or online?

The importance of a strong curriculum lies in its ability to broaden and strengthen the minds of young people.

Knowledge is a key component when preparing young people for life in modern Britain. It's not just about schooling children to spot things that are fake, it's about teaching them what's real.

In a world where children (and adults for that matter) are being told that the answer to all the world's problems is simple: build a wall, destroy capitalism, prevent immigration, cancel Brexit, carry out Brexit, it falls to schools to broaden their outlook, not narrow it.

A wide, rich curriculum, well taught, arms children with knowledge. That knowledge allows them to contribute to discussions about the world around them and the issues faced by society. It enables them to look again at what they are told is the 'truth' and challenge it where appropriate, not just parrot the latest lazy narrative, or conspiracy theory.

And for teachers, the challenge is to cut through the noise that assails young people on all sides and make knowledge even more seductive and compelling. Well-informed children are resilient children.

Developing an engaging and rich curriculum, imparting knowledge, encouraging

a healthily critical eye and instilling strong values will turn out the rounded and resilient citizens of the future. This country needs them.

Thank you