

Press release: Free sanitary products in all primary schools

Free sanitary products will be offered to girls in all primary schools in England from early next year, under plans announced today by the Department for Education.

The Government committed to provide access to free sanitary products in England's secondary schools and colleges in last month's Spring Statement, and today Children and Families Minister Nadhim Zahawi confirmed access to the free products will also be fully-funded by the Department for Education in all primary schools across the country.

Extending the programme to all primary schools follows feedback from teachers, students and parents, and the DfE is now working with key stakeholders in the public and private sector to roll-out the programme in a cost-effective manner that supports girls and young women across the country.

Children and Families Minister Nadhim Zahawi said:

This Government is determined to ensure that no-one should be held back from reaching their potential – and wants everyone to lead active, healthy, happy lives.

That is why earlier this year we committed to fully-fund access to free sanitary products in all secondary schools and colleges in England.

After speaking to parents, teachers and pupils, we are now extending this to more than 20,000 primary schools so that every young person in all our schools and colleges gets the support that they need.

The announcement builds on bold new relationships, sex and health education, published earlier this year, to ensure every pupil learns about leading healthy lives, including menstrual wellbeing, as part of a well-rounded education on mental and physical health.

It also follows other steps taken by the Government, including the introduction in 2015 of a £15 million annual Tampon Tax Fund to support women's charities – and a commitment to end period poverty globally by 2030.

This commitment included the creation of a government-wide taskforce, backed by £250,000, to work with businesses and the third-sector to develop new ideas to tackle period poverty.

Today's announcement – which will see all primary and secondary schools and colleges offered fully-funded products at the earliest possible opportunity

to roll-out the scheme nationwide in early 2020 – has been welcomed by charities and campaigners who have heralded the “fantastic news”.

Amika George, founder of #FreePeriods, said:

This is fantastic news, and we're so glad that the government has extended this pledge to primary schools. Period poverty should never be a barrier to education.

With free access to menstrual products for every child in compulsory education, every student can go to school without the anxiety or stress of worrying where their next pad or tampon will come from. This commitment will ensure that all children can fully participate in lessons and focus in class, and their period will never hold them back.

Isla, 19, a member of Girlguiding's panel of Advocates, said:

A third (30%) of girls aged 11-21 told Girlguiding they have missed school or college because of their period. That's unacceptable. Every girl should have access to something so basic – and I am so excited that the government is making sure that they do. Free menstrual products in primary schools will help make period poverty a thing of the past.

It'll also help break down the stigma girls deal with every month. Too many people think periods are a secret or something to be ashamed of. But giving primary school girls access to tampons and pads will help break the taboo of periods from a young age.

Press release: Minister shares primary school confidence on offer day

Parents can feel more confident than ever before that their children will get a world-class education, as they find out which primary school has offered their child a place in September, School Standards Minister Nick Gibb said today (16 April).

With 87% of primary schools now judged good or outstanding, compared to 67% in 2010, Mr Gibb said parents should be reassured that their children will be getting a good education at schools that are unrecognisable from a generation ago as standards continue to rise.

Last year, 97.7% of primary pupils were offered one of their top three choices, while 91% of were offered their first choice of primary school, and these numbers have been gradually improving since 2014.

School Standards Minister Nick Gibb said:

Any school place offer day is a big event for families, but parents should be reassured that the improvement in the school system means that they would probably find the schools themselves unrecognisable from a generation ago.

The curriculum has been revitalised, the phonics check is helping thousands of six-year-olds become fluent readers, the Teaching for Mastery programme means many pupils are being taught maths using world leading techniques and the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers is falling.

What this means in practice is that even in instances where parents aren't getting the news they hoped for today, the likelihood is that their child will be attending a school which will provide a first-class education.

Standards have risen since 2010 with 1.9 million more children in good or outstanding schools. As of December 2018, 85% of schools were judged to this standard, compared to 68% in 2010.

The attainment gap between disadvantaged students and their peers has also narrowed since 2011 and there have been notable improvements in Key Stage 2 achievement, as the new national curriculum has set a higher standard in schools.

Last summer, more children across the country met the expected standard at the end of primary school in all of reading, writing and mathematics – totalling 64% of pupils in 2018 compared to 61% in 2017.

This follows the introduction of the Government's phonics screening check in 2012, with 163,000 more 6-year-olds on track to become fluent readers compared to seven years ago, and England's recent rise up the international PIRLS rankings puts the success of the Government's reforms on a global scale.

Alongside progress in children's reading abilities, the teaching of maths in primary school has been transformed, in line with the principle of the maths 'mastery' pedagogy. This technique of teaching is successfully practised by world leaders in mathematics, Shanghai and Singapore, and is now being introduced to schools in England.

Thanks to £41 million investment there are already over 2,500 schools across the country involved in this approach, and the Government recently announced an additional £27 million to further expand the programme to reach 11,000 primary and secondary schools in total by 2023.

To ensure every child has access to a good school place, the Government is on track to create a million new school places by the end of this decade – the largest increase for at least two generations. Since 2010, 921,000 school places have been created, with 636,000 of these in primary schools. This follows a decrease of 100,000 places between 2004 and 2010.

Primary school offer day comes after the Government set out new guidance calling on housing developers to make financial contributions for new school places their developments create. The guidance will help local authorities to secure funding and land from developers for new schools and school expansions, which are required due to the construction of new houses.

Press release: Trade Secretary announces £1 billion to support trade with Iraq

The International Trade Secretary Dr Liam Fox MP is in Baghdad, Iraq for a three-day visit (Sunday, April 14th to Tuesday, April 16th 2019) where he will meet with the Iraqi Prime Minister and announce that UK Export Finance will make an additional £1 billion of support available for British firms operating in Iraq, providing jobs and promoting stability in the region.

In the first visit to Iraq by a cabinet minister for more than a year, Dr Fox will be meeting with senior Iraqis including the Prime Minister and President to discuss our bilateral trading relationship.

Alongside the Iraqi Prime Minister Adil Abdul Mehdi, the Trade Secretary announced that UK Export Finance is making an additional £1 billion available to support UK exports to Iraq, bringing its total support for the country to £2 billion. The measure is designed to promote Iraq's economic development and nation-building, ensuring that UKEF can continue to help the Government of Iraq deliver critical infrastructure.

To date, UKEF has deployed its existing capacity for Iraq, providing around £1 billion in support for projects including:

- A US\$35 million (£26 million) loan for the scoping phase of a water and wastewater treatment project in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq provided by UK company Biwater.
- US\$1.02 billion (£770 million) to support Enka UK and GE to build two new gas-fired power stations in the Basra region and UK-based GE Grid Solutions to build and refurbish 14 electricity sub-stations across Iraq.
- Support for a €30.2 million (£26 million) Siemens UK contract to refurbish the 320-megawatt Al Mussaib power station in southern Iraq.

- A loan to support a US\$220 million (£169 million) contract being undertaken by a UK subsidiary of GE to refurbish gas-fired power stations.

This support is available to UK companies selling to Iraq or investing in the country and will help the Government of Iraq access finance for projects that source goods and services from the UK.

The International Trade Secretary Dr Liam Fox MP said:

The atmosphere in Baghdad is one of optimism – it is a country which is having an increasingly stable period at a time of significant unrest in the wider region. The British government, working closely with the UK private sector and our Iraqi partners, have a key role to play in the country's long-term prosperity. The £1 billion we have announced today will significantly strengthen our ability to do just that.

Iraq's future is bright, and my international economic department will continue to work tirelessly to ensure it maintains this stability, allowing the hard work of its talented citizens to flourish for the benefit of all.

Trade is about more than economic self-interest, it is the means through which we deliver the mutual prosperity that underpins our collective security. That is the true prize of trade policy and promotion done right.

During the visit, the Trade Secretary will speak to young Iraqi entrepreneurs who are working to create a more vibrant private sector to support the long-term stabilisation and prosperity of Iraq. He will also meet British firms operating in-country whose investments are vital in the country's rebuilding efforts.

Siemens UK is improving the electricity supply in Iraq using UKEF finance. Steve Scrimshaw, Country Lead, Gas and Power UK and Ireland, Siemens UK, said:

We are delighted this additional funding has been made available for ongoing regeneration in Iraq and look forward to working with UKEF and the Iraqi government on future opportunities.

Siemens has already benefited from UKEF support for work on the refurbishment of the Al Mussaib power plant. This will be vital for the people of Iraq who will benefit from both the power and the jobs it will create. With work being delivered from our Newcastle business, it is also helping to secure jobs in the UK.

Press release: Minister shares primary school confidence on offer day

School system hailed as 'unrecognisable' from a generation ago on primary school offer day

Press release: Free sanitary products in all primary schools

Government to offer access to free sanitary products in England's primary schools from early 2020