

High-flying young women and girls celebrated at Downing Street reception

Campaigners, teachers and young women were welcomed to Downing Street by the Prime Minister to celebrate the global achievements of girls in education and entrepreneurship.

Teachers and pupils mingled alongside guests including FGM campaigner Fahma Mohammed; Science Girl director Anna Zacharia; Amy Stephens, founder of 'Chicks with Bricks' – a network connecting women in the construction industry; and Belinda Parmar, activist and founder of 'The Empathy Business' – a organisation which aims to encourage companies to encourage compassion towards their employees.

The PM also met several Youth Advocates from Girl Guides, one of the UK's most well-known charities for girls and young women. These included 19 year-old Isla Gerrard, 17 year-old Emily Jenkins, and Kim Singh Sall, aged 18, who discussed their girl-led manifesto, 'Future Girl' with the Prime Minister, as well as sharing with him the findings of their 'Girls' Attitudes' survey.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

This event was a fantastic opportunity to meet so many trailblazers in the world of education and empowerment for girls and women.

We've just seen a terrific set of GCSE and A Level results – a testament to the hard graft of young people, their dedicated teachers and their families.

Girls are bagging the majority of the top grade 9 results at GCSE and narrowing the gap in subjects like physics and maths at A Level.

I'm passionate about making sure girls everywhere get access to a good education – and that's why I announced funding for 600,000 children to have the chance to go to school for the first time at the G7 summit last week.

I was tremendously inspired by the young women I've met and I'm confident their successes will encourage a new generation of female leaders.

Other Ministers attending the reception included Gavin Williamson, Secretary of State for Education, and Alok Sharma, Secretary of State for International Development; and Matthew Rycroft, Permanent Secretary at the Department for International Development.

Gavin Williamson, Secretary of State for Education said:

This summer hundreds of thousands of young people received their GCSE, A Level and technical and vocational results, and showed what a pool of talent we have in this country.

Girls in particular have excelled themselves: for the first time, girls are now doing more science A Levels than boys, the highest proportion of GCSE entries achieving grade 4 or above were from girls, and more A Level entries from girls received A* to A.

There's always more to do though, and I'll continue working to make sure every child and young person is getting the education they deserve. That means continuing to attract and retain talented individuals in our classrooms, giving teachers the powers they need to deal with bad behaviour and bullying, and getting more young people to consider high quality technical and vocational routes so this country has the skilled workforce it needs for the future.

International Development Secretary Alok Sharma commented:

Investing in quality education for girls isn't just the right thing to do, it's the smart thing to do.

No country can truly develop and lift themselves out of poverty if half the population are locked out of economic opportunities. That is why UK aid is getting girls into school, giving them the skills they need to get a job and helping women with start-ups in Africa to grow their businesses.

I had the pleasure of meeting not just hard-working teachers and students but also female entrepreneurs who are breaking down barriers and proving an inspiration to girls around the world.