

# News story: Drive to raise education standards in areas most in need

Raising education standards by supporting underperforming schools and offering young people more opportunities to make the best of their lives are at the heart of a package of measures announced today by Education Secretary Damian Hinds.

Aimed particularly at disadvantaged areas across the country, today's moves include:

- More than £45million awarded to successful multi-academy trusts to help tackle underperformance and improve schools in areas that lack capacity;
- 75 projects sharing £25million to provide more support for schools, many of which will increase pupils' literacy and numeracy skills; and
- The publication of the next six [Opportunity Area](#) plans in Bradford, Doncaster, Fenland and East Cambridgeshire, Hastings, Ipswich and Stoke-on-Trent.

The announcement builds on the government's record of 1.9million more children now in good or outstanding schools than in 2010, England's pupils now amongst the world's best readers and GCSE and A levels reformed to match the best education systems in the world.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

As Education Secretary, I want all children to get a truly world-class education that not only inspires them to make the most of their lives but also gives them the opportunity to fulfil their ambitions, no matter where they live.

Standards are rising in schools across the country but there is more to do to make sure that every child benefits from the progress we've already made thanks to an incredibly talented generation of teachers.

By supporting good and outstanding schools to help others improve, and focusing on disadvantaged areas where our young people need extra help, we can continue to make a difference to people's everyday lives and build a Britain that's fit for the future.

As part of the [Multi-Academy Trust Development and Improvement Fund](#) (MDIF), announced in October 2017, over £45million will support multi-academy trusts to drive improvement. More than £30million of this will be targeted to around 300 academy trusts in areas facing the greatest challenges across England. The attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers has narrowed in recent years – by 7% at GCSE and 10.5% at KS2 since 2011.

The money will go to more than 400 multi-academy trusts (MATs) with a proven record to help them build their capacity so they can help drive further improvements and raise standards. Ofsted data shows that 450,000 children are studying in sponsored academies rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding' that were typically previously underperforming.

Under the latest round of the Strategic School Improvement Fund (SSIF), 75 largely school-led initiatives will share £25million to help more children from disadvantaged backgrounds, including many to support to help master the basics of reading and maths in primary school. Overall, the SSIF is worth up to £280million over two years. It targets resources at the schools most in need to improve school performance, support teacher development and drive up pupil attainment.

The next six Opportunity Area plans – for Bradford, Doncaster, Fenland and East Cambridgeshire, Hastings, Ipswich and Stoke-on-Trent – have been developed with local educators, employers and voluntary and community organisations and set out how they will improve the life chances of young people in these communities.

They follow the publication of the government's social mobility action plan [Unlocking Talent, Fulfilling Potential](#) in December which focuses £800million of resources on those areas that can benefit the most. All 12 Opportunity Areas will benefit from a share of £22 million through a new Essential Life Skills programme, to help young people in these areas develop life skills in resilience, wellbeing and employability.

Among the initiatives confirmed today in the latest round of the Strategic School Improvement Fund is Cotgrave Candleby Lane School, a teaching school in Nottinghamshire. Funding will be used to improve reading outcomes across primary education by focusing on phonics and other reading practices in early years education, the teaching of comprehension at Key Stage 2, and measures to close or narrow the attainment gap between pupils.

Chris Wheatley, CEO of the Flying High Trust Partnership that runs the teaching school, said:

We are thrilled to be successful in securing our application. This project is testament to strong collaboration between Nottinghamshire County Council and Nottinghamshire Teaching Schools.

Drawing on the capacity of the school-led system; we aim to bring about sustainable improvement in reading across priority schools and a legacy of collaborative working to improve reading outcomes for all Nottinghamshire children.

Sir Kevan Collins, Chief Executive of the Education Endowment Foundation and Evidence Champion for the Opportunity Areas, said:

We know that your chance of getting on in life is strongly linked to where you grew up and that low levels of social mobility are becoming entrenched in some parts of the UK. Improving outcomes for young people in these 'coldspots' needs a concerted effort from local partners, schools and other organisations across every stage of a young person's life.

So it is welcome to see this evident in today's six plans. The need now is to move swiftly from planning to action so that children and young people experience the benefit of this investment.

To really have an impact, change has to be informed by evidence. Our Research Schools will be crucial in doing this in each of the Opportunity Areas. They will help to break down barriers so that research does not stay in the pages of academic journals but has a real impact on classroom practice. Allowing teachers to use lessons from what's worked to inform their practice can make all the difference to attainment.

Ahead of the announcement, the Secretary of State visited Curwen Primary School in London to meet with pupils and teachers. The school is part of The Tapscott Learning Trust, which has been awarded a share of the Multi-Academy Trust Development and Improvement Fund. Chief Executive Officer of The Tapscott Learning Trust and Executive Head of Curwen Primary School Paul Harris said:

It was a great honour and privilege to be able to show the new Secretary of State around our fantastic, outstanding school. As a school, and now as part of The Tapscott Learning Trust, it is our core mission to work in partnership with other providers to improve children's life chances. We welcome the opportunity to be able to demonstrate to the Secretary of State some of the amazing work that we are doing and to also discuss wider educational issues, particularly the way in which we train and support teachers through the continued development of our Training Hub and also to improve primary sports provision from our new Sports Hub.

We are delighted to have been awarded this grant by the MAT Development and Improvement Fund to help and support our work, not just within The Tapscott Learning Trust, but for other schools. We are confident that having secured this funding this will now be achievable and enable us to achieve our vision. We also look forward to working in partnership as an accredited provider of courses for the Autism Education Trust.

Simon Bramwell OBE, chief executive of the SS Simon and Jude Church of England multi-academy trust, a small trust with four primary academies, has been awarded a share of the Multi-Academy Trust Development and Improvement Fund to take on and improve schools that need support raising attainment for

disadvantaged pupils in Knowsley and Salford. He said:

We are delighted to have been awarded MDIF funding to help support school improvement in these areas. The funding will go a long way in enabling us to provide greater capacity and sustainability for delivering the school improvement model across the Trust.