

News story: Government sets out plans to support underperforming schools

Underperforming schools in England are set to receive extra support under Government plans to raise standards in classrooms across the country.

Following a pledge by the Secretary of State to simplify the school accountability system, giving teachers freedom to get on with their job without interference, Schools Minister Lord Agnew has today (9 November) set out how the department will support schools that are underperforming and how they will be identified.

From today, the following measures will be used to identify schools that need additional support. They include:

- the floor and coasting standards being used as ways to identify schools that need help, rather than as triggers for intervention ahead of an academy conversion;
- where a school is struggling it will receive support from a high-performing school leader, as well as access to up to £16,000 for the small number of schools judged as 'Requires Improvement' in their last two Ofsted inspections; and
- the 'coasting' measure will no longer be used as the starting point of a formal intervention – this was a key pledge by the Education Secretary during a speech to school leaders earlier this year.

Regional Schools Commissioners will no longer issue warning notices to schools on educational grounds unless they have been rated inadequate by Ofsted.

Today's changes come ahead of a formal consultation in the New Year looking at whether the floor and coasting standards used to judge school performance should be replaced by a single measure.

Minister for the School System, Lord Agnew, said:

Standards in our schools have risen, with the proportion of pupils in good or outstanding schools up from 66% in 2010 to 86% in 2018.

Today's changes will simplify the school accountability system so teachers and school leaders know where they stand and simplify a system that we know can be a concern amongst the profession.

Where a school is struggling, we will aim to take swift action, providing practical hands on support and, where necessary, more formal steps.

The support that we are offering will be focused around delivering support that can be embedded into a school's teaching programme for

the long term.

The changes confirmed today will make the school system easier for school leaders and parents to understand.

Schools that meet the criteria for extra support will be able to do so in two ways:

- Up to three days' support from a designated National Leader of Education (NLE) who will work with the senior leadership of the school or trust to identify their specific needs and ways these can be addressed through DfE funded programmes; and
- For those also judged as 'Requires Improvement' in their last two Ofsted inspections, an additional offer of up to £16,000 that can be put towards the costs of implementing the activity agreed between the NLE and school.

Paul Whiteman, General Secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT), said:

Today's announcement is a welcome clarification of the promises made by the Secretary of State at our annual conference in May this year. It also marks a significant point in the ongoing work between NAHT and the DfE to address some of the big concerns of school leaders.

Accountability is obviously a key concern, and today's announcement clears up some of the confusion regarding the roles of Ofsted and RSCs, as well as providing much needed reassurance that schools seeking to improve will receive support rather than sanction. This is an important step forward, and consistent with the findings of our Improving School Accountability report which was published in September.

Richard Gill, National Leader of Education and Member of the Teaching Schools Council, said:

This programme of support, coordinated by the Teaching Schools Council, will ensure that there is greater collaboration across our regions with the aim of providing bespoke support where needed, ensuring that more children and young people can attend a great school.

This will also support the self-improving system which relies on effective leaders working beyond their own schools to make improvements to the wider school landscape.

Today's announcements follow the Education Secretary's commitment with

teaching unions and Ofsted to strip away unnecessary workload for teachers, and are part of a drive led by the Education Secretary to trust the best school leaders to make decisions in their staff and pupils' best interest.