

Press release: PM speech at High Performing Teachers' Reception: 21 May 2018

Good evening everyone and welcome to Downing Street.

We have teachers here from across the country, including from a school in Wimbledon Park where I used to be a governor!

One of the many wonderful things about living here and working here at No 10 is that I can draw inspiration from the countless great figures who have passed through these rooms over many years.

I was asked earlier what it feels like to feel the history of this place when you are sitting in the Cabinet Room – so many great decisions have been made here, and it has seen so many great people.

But few can claim to have shaped and influenced as many lives as the incredible people here this evening.

You educate. You inspire. You unlock the potential of young minds, turn their aspirations into reality, you nurture the innovators, leaders and entrepreneurs of tomorrow.

I was making a speech earlier today about science and the importance of nurturing innovation and creativity among our young people for the future. So teachers do a remarkable job, and you represent the best of the best. Indeed, we have among us Andria Zafirakou, who I am delighted to welcome back to Downing Street today, who has been named as the world's best, the first ever British winner of the Global Teacher Prize.

But amazing though it is, we are not here today just to celebrate Andria's achievement. We are here to celebrate all of you, and all of your colleagues up and down the country who do such vital work day-in, day-out.

You are completely committed to giving every child the education that is right for them.

And Damian and I are absolutely committed to helping you make that happen. You can see that from what we have achieved so far and what we are doing next.

Compared with 2010, nearly two million more children are being taught in schools that are good or outstanding. We have raised teacher numbers to record levels. We are looking at ways of reducing your workload by stripping out unnecessary bureaucracy. We are working with the profession on a new strategy to drive recruitment and boost retention.

And we are doing all of this because this is a government that supports and

values teachers. Because we know that the success of every young person, in whatever they go on to do in life, is shaped by the education they receive at school.

I was just asked about what education means to me. I said what I say to young people is education is the key to unlock the door to your future, and it is so important.

Although I have to say on my first day at school I did not perhaps view it in quite the same way. Because on my very first day at primary school, the headmistress had to literally carry me, kicking and screaming, into the classroom.

I think at the time she said "look what a silly girl we have here".

Fortunately, it did not take long for me to realise and appreciate both the power of education and the impact that good teachers have on so many young lives.

That's something that stayed with me in my time as a councillor, when I was chairman of the education authority in Merton. It stayed with me as a new MP, when the very first speech I gave was about education, and in my first frontbench job, was as shadow schools minister and then as shadow education secretary.

And it is something that drives me today as Prime Minister.

When I stood on the steps outside this house almost two years ago, I talked about my desire to tackle the burning injustices facing our country today.

And education is the key to doing so, and that means teachers like you are the key to making Britain the great meritocracy it can and should be.

The generations of famous figures who have graced this room throughout history owe their successes to the teachers who inspired and educated them. Teachers just like you.

So I want to thank you, and thank all teachers, for everything you have already done to nurture the next generation.

And let me say, once again, how much I look forward to working with you so that every child in every corner of this country has the best possible start in life."