

# Speech: Why I'm giving education a huge boost: article by Theresa May

As we leave the European Union and begin a journey to a brighter future for our country, the mission of this government is not just to [negotiate the right deal for Britain with Europe](#), but to deliver a better deal for ordinary working families at home.

So at the heart of our [Plan for Britain](#) is a bold domestic agenda of genuine economic and social reform that will lay the foundations for a stronger, fairer and better Britain. Crucially it will ensure future generations of young people from every background and in every part of our country are ready and able to make the most of the opportunities ahead.

Wednesday's [Spring Budget](#) will not just maintain our economic stability and increase our economic resilience, as vital as those measures are, it will focus on giving our young people the skills they need to secure the high-paid, high-skilled jobs of the future. It will ensure British businesses have the future workforce to succeed and support a [Modern Industrial Strategy](#) that spreads growth and prosperity to all sections of society and all regions of the country.

To achieve this requires ambitious and far-reaching reform. Today the UK is placed 16th out of the world's 20 developed economies when it comes to how many people have a technical education. So tomorrow this government will set out the biggest overhaul of post-16 education in 70 years with a multi-billion pound drive to improve technical training, including new technical versions of A levels and 900 hours of teaching each year.

But to give every young person in Britain the best possible start in life also requires a solid ground in academic subjects from the very beginning. So this Spring Budget will continue [my mission to make Britain the world's great meritocracy](#) with a good school place for every child.

Today almost 1.8 million more pupils are taught in good or outstanding schools than in 2010, with 89% of schools in England rated good or outstanding, the highest proportion ever recorded.

Yet despite the progress we have made, there are still 1.25 million children attending primary and secondary schools in England which are rated by Ofsted as requiring improvement or inadequate. And if schools across the north of England and the Midlands had the same average standards as those in the south, nearly 200,000 more children would be attending good schools.

The brutal and unacceptable truth is that for far too many children in ordinary working class families, the chance they have in life is determined by where they live or how much money their parents have. It is selection based on house prices and parental income, because when you are working 2 jobs and struggling to make ends meet, it is no good being told that you can

choose a better school for your children by moving to a different area or paying to go private. These are not choices you can make – and they are not choices you should have to make.

That is why I have made it a personal mission to increase the capacity and diversity of the school system so that there is a good school place that caters to the individual needs and abilities of every single child, whatever their background and wherever they live.

This begins with free schools. I was the Shadow Education Secretary who first argued for their introduction, and I remain a passionate advocate. It is the expansion of academies and the creation of free schools that have been the biggest driver of increased diversity and progress in our school system over the last seven years. And our Schools White Paper, which will be published in the coming weeks, will take this expansion further by asking universities and private schools to do more to provide new good school places, including by sponsoring new free schools. It will remove the barriers that prevent more good faith-based free schools from opening, and it will enable the creation of new selective free schools so that the most academically-gifted children get the specialist support to fulfill their potential regardless of their family income or background.

So Wednesday's Spring Budget will provide hundreds of millions of pounds so that free schools will continue to open well into the next Parliament. It will confirm funding for up to 140 new schools creating well over 70,000 new places. This will include funding for specialist maths schools, like the brilliant [King's College London Maths School](#) that I visited on Monday – a great example of a free school, supported by a university, providing a stretching and tailored education for the most able young people irrespective of their background.

Wednesday's Budget will also remove another gross inequity in the system. Today free travel to school for children from disadvantaged backgrounds is restricted to children attending non-selective schools, meaning that transport costs can become a barrier to these children attending selective schools. That completely undermines the meritocracy we are seeking to build, so on Wednesday we will extend this financial support to cover selective schools too.

If we are to give our children and grandchildren a fair chance to succeed in an ever more competitive world, we have to build a future where every child can access a good school place. That means decisively shifting Britain's education system and building a great meritocracy so that children from ordinary working families are given the chances their richer contemporaries take for granted. Wednesday's [Spring Budget](#) takes the next steps in making this a reality and building a country that truly does work for everyone.

Find out more about the Prime Minister's visit to King's College London Mathematics School:

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