Press release: Education standards continue to rise at GCSE and A level

Educational standards continue to rise across England's secondary schools, as results published today (Thursday 25 January) show more young people from disadvantaged backgrounds achieving good grades in the core academic subjects.

Following the introduction of more rigorous GCSE and A levels to match the best education systems in the world, the data shows:

- The attainment gap between disadvantaged secondary school pupils and their peers has narrowed by 3.2% since last year and 10% since 2011;
- Results for Multi Academy Trusts, with Harris Federation, The Thinking Schools Academy Trust and The Diocese of Westminster Academy Trust among the top MAT performers;
- Schools in London continue to perform strongly, with 12 schools in the top 20 for the government's pupil progress measure (Progress 8); and
- More pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, SEN pupils and pupils on free school meals being entered for EBacc subjects since last year – helping ensure pupils have the knowledge and skills they need for future success.

The data builds on the government's record of 1.9 million more children now in good or outstanding schools than in 2010, nine out of ten schools awarded this rating at their last inspection and England's pupils now amongst the world's best readers.

School Standards Minister Nick Gibb said:

> Academic standards are rising in our schools thanks to our reforms and the hard work of teachers, with 1.9million more children in good or outstanding schools than in 2010. Today's results reinforce this success, with teachers and pupils responding well to the new more rigorous curriculum introduced by this government.
>
> The attainment gap between the most disadvantaged pupils and their peers has narrowed by 10 per cent since 2011, and more disadvantaged pupils are studying the core academic subjects, ensuring they have the knowledge and skills they need to make the most of their lives.

> Many free schools and academies are also delivering excellent results for pupils – with Harris Federation and Dixons Academy trusts leading the way.
>
> We will continue to use this evidence to drive up standards even further for all pupils so that they leave school prepared for future success in their education and beyond, helping to build a Britain that is fit for the future.

Other highlights from the statistics show:

- For the first time statistics about disadvantaged students at post-16 (KS5) have been published. This data will help inform future policy decisions so that we can help to focus social mobility policy further at this stage;

- The number of students entering at least four of the five subject areas which are part of the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) – maths, English, sciences, humanities and modern foreign languages (MFL) have increased by 4.8 percentage points this year – up to 82.0% in 2017; and

- GCSE (A*-C) pass rates at 16-18 have increased in English, up from 22.8% to 27.1%, and total entries to English and maths GCSEs by 16-18 students increased by 26.3 percentage points and 13.6 percentage points respectively. This will help ensure pupils leave their education with the knowledge and skills they need for future success.

- Schools across London continue to strong pupil progress. Twelve of the top 20 schools in the government's Progress 8 measure were based in London.

Other regional highlights include:

Confirmation of the top performing schools based on Progress 8 measures, which are as follows:

1. Tauheedul Islam Girls' High School, Blackburn;
2. Wembley High Technology College, London;
3. Taheedul Islam Boys' High School, Blackburn;
4. Harris Academy Battersea, London; and
5. The Steiner Academy Hereford, Herefordshire.

Data on the top five multi-academy trusts on EBacc attainment, which are as follows:

1. Thinking Schools Academy Trust (Medway & Portsmouth);
2. Bright Futures Educational Trust (North West);
3. Tudor Grange Academies Trust (Midlands);

4. Diocese of London; and
5. Diocese of Westminster Academy Trust.

Confirmation of the top performing areas on attainment (Attainment 8) by region, with the top regions as follows:

1. London;
2. South East;
3. East;
4. South West; and
5. North West.

Confirmation of the top performing areas for progressing pupils (Progress 8), with the top local authority areas as follows:

1. Merton;
2. Brent;
3. Barnet;
4. Westminster; and Harrow (joint fourth).

News story: Charity property matters survey

The Ethical Property Foundation is a UK charity which offers voluntary organisations free property guidance, advice and workshops.

It offers a wide range of expert advice on legal issues and premises management working with property professionals.

The Foundation has just launched its bi-annual Charity Property Matters Survey 2018 which takes around 10 minutes to complete. This is the only sector-led property survey about charities' property issues.

You'll need a good understanding of your charity's current property position and any questions about the survey can be emailed to policy@cfg.org.uk

The Charity Commission has been a partner in this research since 2012 and we urge charities to take part.

News story: BEIS and Welsh Government open geological disposal consultations

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), covering England and Northern Ireland, and the Welsh Government, today opened separate consultations which will enable stakeholders and members of the public to help shape policies on the geological disposal programme – the draft Working with Communities policy and the draft National Policy Statement.

Geological disposal involves isolating radioactive waste in a highly-engineered facility deep underground and within multiple protective barriers, to ensure that no harmful quantities of radioactivity ever reach the surface environment. Across the world, geological disposal, preceded by safe and secure interim storage, is acknowledged as the best solution for managing higher-activity radioactive wastes in the long-term.

The consultations will explore views on the approach to planning and selecting a site for a Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) in partnership with potential willing host communities.

Ann McCall, Radioactive Waste Management's (RWM) GDF Siting and Engagement Director, said:

> Geological disposal will provide a safe, secure and long-term solution to managing the UK's radioactive waste, and RWM welcomes the public consultations launched today which place communities at the heart of the process. As the delivery body for geological disposal, we are eager to hear people's views on how we can work with communities to progress this important programme on behalf of society.

You can have your say on the draft policies by responding directly to BEIS or Welsh Government through their dedicated consultation websites. If you are resident in England or Northern Ireland you can participate by visiting the BEIS consultations portal. For Welsh residents, please visit the Welsh Government consultations portal. The consultations will be open for 12 weeks.

News story: New identity checking guidelines

New identity (ID) checking guidelines have been introduced for standard and

enhanced disclosure checks. The new guidelines have been running in parallel with previous guidelines since October 2017. However, the previous guidelines now cease to apply and you must use the new version.

The change is being introduced so that the DBS's identity checking process is aligned with right to work checks. These state that employers must prevent illegal working in the UK by carrying out document checks on people before employing them to make sure they are allowed to work.

If you have any questions about the changes contact customerservices@dbs.gsi.gov.uk.

Press release: Local communities to give views on permanent disposal of radioactive waste

- New consultations on a permanent solution for the disposal of the UK's radioactive waste launched today
- Geological disposal is internationally recognised and secures waste at least 200 metres underground
- Construction of disposal facilities will only take place if local communities give their consent

A safe, responsible, long-term solution for the permanent disposal of radioactive waste is the focus of 2 new consultations launched today by the government.

The UK has long generated radioactive waste most of which is low in radioactivity and is disposed of safely every day – from power stations to use in a range of industrial applications including medicine and defence. Some materials need more specialised disposal facilities and this waste is currently held safely in stores above ground. It is not sustainable to keep storing past and future waste on a temporary basis.

A Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) is internationally recognised as the safest and most secure way to permanently dispose of higher activity radioactive waste. This involves placing this waste at least 200 metres underground in a highly engineered facility made up of multiple layers of materials such as steel, rock and clay to provide protection while some of the waste remains radioactive – ensuring that no harmful quantities of radioactivity ever reach the surface.

The construction of a GDF would also support a new generation of nuclear power stations in the UK, by providing a safe and secure way to dispose of

the waste they produce. It will create up to 2,000 well-paid, skilled jobs and bring at least £8 billion to the UK economy over the lifetime of the facility.

Energy Minister Richard Harrington said:

> We owe it to future generations to take action now to find a suitable permanent site for the safe disposal of our radioactive waste. And it is right that local communities have a say. Planning consent will only be given to sites which have local support.

Mr Harrington added:

> As the government set out in our Industrial Strategy, the nuclear sector has a key role to play in increasing productivity and driving clean growth. Nuclear is a vital part of our energy mix, providing low carbon power now and into the future.

Professor Iain Stewart, Director of the Sustainable Earth Institute, Plymouth University, said:

> A geological disposal facility is widely accepted as the only realistic way to dispose of higher activity nuclear waste for the long-term.

Geological disposal facilities are already being developed in Finland, Sweden, France, and Canada.

The first consultation, Working with communities sets out how the project developer will engage with people in areas that may be interested in hosting a disposal facility to seek their views and the second, on the proposed National Policy Statement, will create a rigorous planning process.

Radioactive Waste Management Ltd (RWM) will deliver geological disposal on behalf of the government.

Ann McCall, Radioactive Waste Management's GDF Siting and Engagement Director, said:

> Geological disposal will provide a safe, secure and long-term solution to managing the UK's radioactive waste, and RWM welcomes the public consultations launched today which place communities at the heart of the process.

1. Both consultations will run for 12 weeks. The Working with Communities consultation will apply to England and Northern Ireland. The Welsh

Government is conducting its own consultation on Working with Communities in parallel with the UK Government. The Scottish Government has its own policy on the management of radioactive waste.
Working with communities: implementing geological disposal

2. The National Policy Statement consultation will apply to England only. It will require parliamentary scrutiny by the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Select Committee and could be subject to a Parliamentary debate and vote.
National Policy Statement for geological disposal infrastructure
3. Higher activity radioactive waste is produced from the generation of electricity in nuclear power stations, the production and reprocessing of nuclear fuel and the use of radioactive materials in industry, medicine, research and nuclear defence.