

Speech: Amanda Spielman speech to Annual Apprenticeships Conference

Thank you for inviting me to speak to you today.

Introduction

This is a very important conference, at a critical time for the development of apprenticeship provision. It is gratifying to see apprenticeships on the news agenda regularly: whether as mentions in Prime Minister's speeches or the subject of thoughtful newspaper columns from journalists you wouldn't normally expect to care. Apprenticeships are, quite rightly, recognised as a vital component of our education and skills sector. Less gratifying, perhaps, is that too much of this recognition is about the system, not yet, working as it should.

That's why I am so pleased to be here today. I see it as essential that providers, policy makers and employers can have open and frank discussions about what works and what needs to be improved.

It is almost a year now since the introduction of the apprenticeship levy—one of the most significant changes to apprenticeship funding that we have ever seen. Alongside the slow but inexorable move from apprenticeship frameworks to apprenticeship standards, providers and employers are working to secure the training and support that businesses need to develop a well-trained and productive workforce.

And at Ofsted, we carry on supporting the reform programme. Indeed we're putting our money where our mouth is, with our own award-winning band of 29 business administration apprentices.

Challenges

We know that it has been a challenging year for providers. The levy has required a different relationship with employers. There have been challenges in applying for, and receiving, non-levy allocations. There have also been problems getting on the Register of apprenticeship training providers. And, in too many instances, in finding a replacement standard for a framework—particularly at levels two and three.

I suspect that the fall in apprenticeship starts is due to a combination of these factors. Nevertheless, any barriers that prevent employers taking on an apprentice, or standing in the way of good providers delivering high quality training, must concern us all.

The first quarter of 2017 to 2018 saw almost 50,000 fewer starts than the same quarter in 2016 to 2017. There is no denying, that the low number of starts continues to be a concern, which is why I was heartened to see Anne

Milton's recent confidence that numbers will pick up in the new academic year. We all have to hope that this is true.

It is not just about overall volumes though. We are also experiencing some unintended consequences from the emerging trend towards higher-level apprenticeships. Of course, I understand, indeed applaud, more apprenticeships at higher levels, especially when there is clear progression in an occupation, from level 2 through to degree level. However, around 40% of the standards approved or in-development are at higher and degree levels, while only 7% of apprentices work at these levels.

This shift may be good for the economy in the long run, but the reduced number of apprenticeships at levels two and three is another destabilising factor in the system. To put it more brutally, there is a risk that young people, fresh from school, get squeezed out of apprenticeship routes because employers prioritise higher level programmes. This makes it more difficult for young people looking for entry-level employment straight from GCSEs.

In this context, I am pleased to see that the Institute for Apprenticeships is upping the rate at which it develops and approves apprenticeship standards. Up till now, this process really has been too slow. I am also pleased that there is now more flexibility to include qualifications within apprenticeship standards. I see these positive developments as a sign that the institute is listening to the concerns expressed by employers and training providers. However, I would still like to see a greater focus on achieving a set of standards that really reflect the balance of training and development needs of the economy.

Ofsted's role

With all the change, and uncertainty in the system, I am sure you want reassurance about Ofsted's agility and ability to adapt inspection to fit the new reality.

We know the challenges you face. We are working hard with you to make sure that inspection takes account of the changing landscape. But, let me be absolutely clear, we will not be excusing poor performance. Regardless of the changes that we are all dealing with: apprentices deserve high quality training at, and away from, work.

Pilot inspection findings

We have already carried out a number of pilot inspections to make sure that we are looking at the right things in this new environment. And we found a need for inspectors to focus on the bottom line, not the money, but what knowledge, skills and behaviours apprentices actually develop and acquire.

Now I hope many of you will know that one of my big interests as Chief Inspector is looking at the substance of education. By this, I mean the entirety of what is actually learnt, whether at school, college or on an apprenticeship.

As I said at the launch of my first [Annual Report](#), our early research has shown that, all too often, the knowledge that we want young people to acquire is lost in the dash for grades and stickers.

These pilot inspections of apprenticeship providers have revealed that many of the concerns we have uncovered at a school level are also evident in apprenticeships.

We are seeing an over-emphasis on simply ticking the box to show that the next part of the qualification has been achieved. There is not enough focus on the actual skills, knowledge and behaviours learned.

Indeed, most providers in our pilots found it difficult to demonstrate what actual progress their apprentices were really making. As providers, you need to consider how you make sure that apprentices are making progress. This isn't for inspectors, not for Ofsted, but for apprentices' and employers' benefit. It is also to inform the training and development programme that apprentices need to be following to pass end-point assessments.

The findings from our pilot inspections are informing changes to the inspection handbook. We will carry on iterating and adapting these as the systems develop.

Inspections of apprenticeships

More broadly, we are now developing our new education inspection framework for September 2019. How we inspect and report on apprenticeships are important considerations in our thinking and planning for this new framework. What we learn on inspections now, and what we learn from our work with organisations like AELP, the British Chambers of Commerce and the CBI, will inform our development. And of course, we will consult on our proposals.

But the changes in the system aren't just about new frameworks and new ways of inspecting. I know that many of you have concerns about the number of untested providers entering the market and the effect this could have on quality. Well, rest assured, we are not standing idly by and waiting for new providers to fail. We are doing all that we can to make sure that no apprentice's future opportunity is ruined by poor provision. It is essential that poor quality provision is spotted and tackled quickly, so that it doesn't damage an individual's prospects or the overall apprenticeship brand.

We have already begun a series of early monitoring visits to assess the quality of these new providers. Some of you will have heard about our first monitoring visits, which hit the headlines, at least in the trade press, last week. There is no hiding the fact that what we found at Key6 Group was worrying. And I'm very pleased that there has been a prompt reaction by ESFA [Education and Skills Funding Agency].

But, it is important that we don't over-interpret this one result as a judgement on all new providers coming on stream with the levy. We are doing more monitoring visits of this type. And I very much hope that positive results will significantly outnumber the disappointments.

Besides these monitoring visits to new providers, we have increased our inspection focus on subcontractors, many of whom are providing apprenticeship training. We are doing this in two ways. Firstly, as part of our standard inspections, where providers have a significant proportion of subcontracted provision, we are increasing our focus on this part. This will mean that teams can evaluate and report, in more detail, on the quality of education and training in individual subcontractors.

In addition, we are making monitoring visits to a number of directly-funded providers to look specifically at subcontracted provision. This way, we can make sure that apprentices are getting the best possible training. We expect the first of these to be published in the next couple of weeks.

Our message here is simple. As the direct contract holder, you are responsible for your learners. If you subcontract, for whatever reason, you are still responsible for making sure your apprentice gets high quality training. If you are sitting back and collecting the money, without taking proper responsibility for quality, you are failing your apprentices. We are determined to expose this in the system.

And, just in case, any of you were being kind enough to worry about us, and whether Ofsted has the resources to deliver this increased volume of inspection, please don't worry: we are being equally robust in our approach to government for funding. Indeed the DfE has already acknowledged that it needs to fund us properly for this work.

Standards

With the experience of Learndirect still prominent in all of our minds, I have no doubt that you are all acutely aware of the risks when large sums of money flow into a system.

It is sobering, in that respect, to look at recent inspection outcomes. Between September 2017 and February 2018, we made a judgement on the apprenticeship provision at 55 providers. We found three-fifths of them to be good or outstanding, with 16 requiring improvement. Six were inadequate. This means that 4 in 10 providers did not offer high quality training for apprentices. There is no way of dressing this up – it is not good enough.

But looking at it another way, the good and outstanding providers were generally the larger ones, so 33,000 apprentices were in good or outstanding provision – almost 80% of the overall places. And this is a lot higher than the provision looked at in the previous year. Then, only 60% of apprentices were being trained in providers of the same quality, we have excluded Learndirect from those figures. To be clear, it is not a perfect year-on-year comparison because inspection priorities and scheduling decisions affect which providers are selected for inspection. However, I do believe the figures are cause for optimism about quality in the sector.

So, while we rightly shine a light on concerns in the system, and I do have to talk about where things are going wrong. I also believe it is important to celebrate where things are going well. We see outstanding apprenticeship

providers like National Grid and Craven College and Fareham College. There we see leaders and managers who work very closely with local employers to make sure that apprenticeships meet the needs of the local economy. They expect the best of their apprentices who show exemplary skills, getting the qualifications and competencies they need.

And whether it's TTE Training with 160 engineering apprentices on various pathways, Busy Bees Nurseries and its range of early years apprenticeships or CITB supporting 10,000 apprentices in the construction industry—these very different types of outstanding provider are similar in one thing: the determination to give their apprentices top-notch training and to set them on a path to a successful and fulfilling career.

Conclusion

So, to conclude, we cannot escape the fact that this is a testing time for apprenticeships, a period of significant change that has inevitably brought a level of uncertainty alongside great opportunity.

There is still a way to go before we can confidently declare the new approach a success, but it is possible to see it beginning to take shape.

My inspectors are seeing some excellent provision around the country, but not enough of it and we need to see more. The sector is adapting confidently to change, but we need to make sure that the pace doesn't slacken.

Ofsted's overarching goal, as set out in our corporate strategy, is to be a force for improvement in all the sectors we inspect and regulate. This is as relevant for apprenticeship provision as it is for schools or child protection. Through our work, we will provide the evidence of what is working and the early warning of where things are going wrong. For a system in the midst of change, this could not be more vital.

After all, success of this ambitious apprenticeship programme is essential, not only to the needs of our wider economy, but for the young people and adult learners so desperate for the right opportunity to prosper.

I know all of you in this room are working hard to ensure this success. I am delighted to be joining all the winners of the inaugural AAC apprenticeship awards at tonight's ceremony in recognition of that commitment.

Thank you.

[Press release: Statement on the](#)

sentencing of Ahed Tamimi

The conviction and sentencing of Ahed Tamimi is emblematic of how the unresolved conflict is blighting the lives of a new generation, who should be growing up together in peace, but continue to be divided.

The treatment of Palestinian children in Israeli military detention remains a human rights priority for the UK. We will continue to call upon Israel to improve its practices in line with international law and obligations.

We have offered to help the Israeli authorities through expert-to-expert talks with UK officials. The offer still stands and we hope Israel will take us up on it. While we recognise that Israel has made some improvements, it needs to do much more to safeguard vulnerable people in its care.

Press release: £260 million of clean air funding launched by government

The UK Plan for Tackling Roadside Nitrogen Dioxide Concentrations was produced by the government in July last year, and outlined that councils with the worst levels of air pollution at busy road junctions and hotspots must take robust action in the shortest time possible.

Fulfilling a commitment to support local authorities to deliver these plans, the government has today launched a £220m Clean Air Fund to minimise the impact of local plans on individuals and businesses. A range of options local authorities could consider to utilise this money such as new park and ride services, freight consolidation centres, concessionary travel schemes and improvements to bus fleets have been set out.

At the same time, more than £40 million from the £255 million Implementation Fund has been awarded to support local authorities take action as soon as possible to improve air quality.

This includes:

- £11.7 million to the 28 local authorities with the biggest air quality challenges to help carry out the work needed to develop air quality plans, including securing resource and expertise
- £24.5 million to the same 28 local areas to support a range of measures to take action locally. Examples include installing electric charge point hubs in car parks; junction improvements; bus priority measures; building cycle routes; incentivising ultra-low emission taxis through licensing schemes and leasing electric vehicles; and traffic management

and monitoring systems

- £2.4 million from the 2017/18 Air Quality Grant for local community projects to tackle air quality at a grass roots level. This comes in addition to £3.7m already awarded in last year's Air Quality Grant, which included an award winning project taken forward by Westminster City Council to provide advice and toolkits for small and medium businesses to reduce transport emissions from deliveries associated with their operations
- £1.65 million to support the 33 local authorities that have been asked to conduct targeted feasibility studies to identify measures that could bring forward compliance dates within the shortest possible time

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

We have been clear that local leaders are best placed to develop innovative plans that rapidly meet the needs of their communities. Today's funding demonstrates the government's commitment to support the local momentum needed and continue to improve our air now and for future generations.

Improving air quality is about more than just tackling emissions from transport, so later this year we will publish a comprehensive Clean Air Strategy. This will set out how we will address all forms of air pollution, delivering cleaner air for the whole country.

Today's announcement is part of a £3.5 billion plan to improve air quality and reduce harmful emissions.

[News story: Nick Gibb attends International Summit of the Teaching Profession](#)

School Standards Minister Nick Gibb recognised the dedication and passion of teachers around the world as he opened an international summit on teaching today (22 March).

Speaking in front of his global counterparts and representatives from teaching unions, the Minister highlighted the difference teachers in England make to their pupils lives in classrooms every day.

During his [speech](#), the School Standards Minister highlighted the performance of schools in England. Thanks to a hardworking and talented generation of teachers, alongside the government's bold reforms, there are now 1.9 million

more children in good or outstanding schools than in 2010, our pupils are now amongst the best readers in Europe and GCSEs have been reformed to match the best education systems in the world.

School Standards Minister Nick Gibb said:

We are striving for a world-class education for every pupil, whatever their background. Thanks to the hard work of teachers and our reforms, academic standards are rising in this country, with 1.9 million more children in good or outstanding schools than in 2010.

We must further raise our game to ensure our education system is fit for the future. By bringing together governments, teaching unions and experts, this summit provides the opportunity to share examples of excellent teaching and best practice from around the world and to celebrate our teachers' achievements.

The Minister's attendance at the summit comes after the Education Secretary announced a package of support – together with Ofsted and the Association of School and College Leaders – to help schools with teacher recruitment and retention, and to reduce the workload that too often stops teachers from having the time and the space to focus on what actually matters to pupils.

It also comes ahead of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting where leaders, business, civil society and young people from around the world will meet to discuss a common future and how they can work together to ensure that all young people can make the most of their lives. The Department for Education has created an education resource pack for teachers and this can be found [here](#).

Speech: Nick Gibb welcomes teachers to international conference

It is a pleasure to be here in Lisbon at the ISTP 2018, a year on from the successful and fruitful ISTP 2017 in Edinburgh co-hosted by the United Kingdom and Scottish Governments.

Last year, we agreed to promote greater equity through commitments to ensure that:

- Every pupil has the opportunity to achieve their potential, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds;

- We raise the status of the teaching profession; and
- Teaching is firmly grounded in high quality research.

Over the course of the last year, England has continued to make strides in these important areas.

In 2010, the government introduced the English Baccalaureate – known as the EBacc. This is a school performance measure rather than a qualification. It is designed to increase the number of pupils taking core academic GCSEs – English, maths, sciences, a language and either history or geography. These GCSEs provide pupils with the broad academic grounding up to the age of 16 that they need to be successful, whatever route they choose to pursue post-16.

Many countries represented here today will consider it axiomatic that pupils study these subjects to at least the age of 16. But in England in 2010, only 1 in 5 pupils were taking this combination of academic GCSEs. That figure is now almost 2 in 5. The government is ambitious for this figure to rise further – to 90% of year 10 pupils studying the EBacc by 2025.

Already, there are promising signs. This year, we saw the highest proportion of disadvantaged pupils, those who receive free school meals, pupils with special educational needs and pupils with English as an additional language taking these core academic GCSEs.

Not only this, results show that the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their more affluent peers has shrunk at primary and secondary school. Since 2011, the attainment gap at age 11 has decreased by 10.5%. Whilst at 16, it has shrunk by 10% since 2011.

The government is raising standards for all pupils, but the tide is rising fastest for those who need it most.

Academies and free schools – which now make up over 70% of secondary schools and over 25% of primary schools – operate independently of local government.

Free schools are amongst some of the highest performing schools in the country and pupils in free schools made more progress, on average, than pupils in other types of school in 2017.

Free schools are amongst some of the highest performing schools in the country and pupils in free schools made more progress, on average, than pupils in other types of free schools in 2017.

Dixons Trinity Academy – a free school based in Bradford – achieved extraordinary results with its first set of GCSEs, placing it in the 10 top schools in England for the progress achieved by its pupils. Strikingly, the progress score for disadvantaged pupils was higher than for that of their more affluent peers.

But the success of the free school and academy movement is not confined to individual schools. The growth of multi-academy trusts has seen excellence spread across schools. Multi-academy trusts are combinations of academies,

from 2 or 3, to as many as 50 or 60 academies, all reporting to one group of independent trustees.

Made up of a combination of schools that have been taken out of local authority control because of that poor performance, which we call sponsored academies; and high performing schools that have voluntarily opted out of local authority control, which we call converter academies; and newly created academies, which we call free schools. These high performing multi-academy trusts demonstrate what it is possible to achieve when power is placed in the hands of high-performing, competitive trusts.

Irrespective of the history of the schools they run, these multi-academy trusts have generated excellent academic results for the pupils they serve, as they compete with other multi-academy trusts in terms of their reputation for academic rigour.

So, the clear advantage of taking schools away from local authority control, is that for the first time, schools are now accountable to their trustees rather than to bureaucracies and there is genuine competition between groups of schools which forces them to respond to the concerns of parents for higher standards of behaviour and stronger academic results.

Thanks to a forensic approach to curriculum design and the implementation of evidence-based approaches to managing poor behaviour, the Inspiration Trust and the Harris Federation – two of the best performing multi-academy trusts – have conclusively demonstrated that all pupils can achieve – whether they live in coastal Norfolk or inner-city London.

They demonstrate that neither the socio-economic context of pupils nor the historic reputation of a school need be a barrier to excellence. And – just as importantly – they provide a model for ensuring that all children succeed. As with Dixons Trinity, schools in these leading multi academy chains are characterised by knowledge-rich curricula, high behavioural expectations and evidence-based teacher-led instruction.

As well as providing the freedom and autonomy to leading free schools and multi-academy trusts, the government is determined to support and empower teachers to raise standards in their schools. The recently closed consultation on how to improve career support and progression for teachers was designed in tandem with the profession. We will respond to the proposals outlined in that consultation – including how we can take forward plans for an Early Career Content Framework – later in the spring. And we will continue to work closely with teachers and teacher representatives on these proposals.

Another key strand of the government's work to support and empower teachers is the government's priority of reducing teacher workload. Teachers should be freed from spending hours on marking and entering progress-data, particularly when evidence suggests these do not improve pupil outcomes.

And headteachers need the security of knowing that their autonomy won't be compromised by rogue school inspectors. That is why the government – in tandem with Ofsted, the schools inspectorate – has been clear on what

inspectors will, and will not, ask when they visit schools.

We are also committed to clarifying the roles of different actors within the system, including what we call Regional Schools Commissioners, the 8 regional offices of the Department for Education. In order to provide teachers and headteachers with the opportunity to innovate and raise standards, they need to know that the accountability system within which they work is fair, transparent and – when needs be – supportive rather than punitive.

The government has played an active role in raising standards in schools and in empowering and supporting teachers. But, it is by standing back and promoting teacher voices, that the government has helped to make the most progress in promoting evidence-based teaching.

There is still a long way to go in empowering all teachers with the knowledge they need. But the success of ResearchED – a series of teacher-led research conferences founded by the teacher Tom Bennett now spanning 4 continents – shows teachers' appetite for research. Tom Bennett [wrote recently](#) about the movement of teachers who are dedicating their Saturday's to discussing and sharing research with one another. Writing powerfully and metaphorically he penned the following:

My ambition is that we start to drive this voluntary professional development, which then cascades back into schools and starts conversations that starts sparks in classrooms that catch fire and burn down dogma. That initial teacher training makes evidence its foundation (where it does not do so already), platforming the best of what we know rather than perpetuating the best of what we prefer. For new teachers to be given skills to discern good evidence from bad. For that to bleed eventually into leadership and from there into the structures that govern us.

But time and again, teachers run up against entrenched views held by those in positions of authority. For example, late last year, an academic from Durham University called the government's promotion of systematic synthetic phonics ['seriously flawed'](#); flying in the face of decades of evidence from around the world that phonics is the most effective method for teaching children to read. He went on to claim that drawing on scientific evidence to inform policy making in science "can be especially dangerous".

Thankfully, the results from the PIRLS international reading tests came out within a month of these comments. This assessment of 9 and 10 year olds' reading comprehension showed that England had risen from joint 10th place in 2011 to joint 8th place in 2016, thanks to a statistically significant rise in our average score. And low-attaining pupils had gained most showing again that the government is raising standards for all, but the tide is rising quickest for those who need it most.

These results were a vindication of the government's evidence-based insistence on the use of systematic synthetic phonics in teaching children to

read.

Too often in education, academics use their positions of authority to ignore the evidence and promote their own beliefs. For too long, education has suffered from putting belief over evidence.

As policy makers, if we are to empower teachers to pursue evidence-based approaches, we must confront the evidence as we find it, not as we would wish it to be.

So, when we come to discuss so-called 'pedagogies of the future', I hope that we will treat unfounded claims sceptically. Instead, we should discuss the data from PISA 2015, which showed that in all but three countries, higher levels of teacher-directed instruction led to significantly higher science results. And we should interrogate the data showing that in the majority of countries, pupils reporting higher levels of enquiry-based instruction achieved significantly worse results.

As we would expect of teachers, data and evidence should be the starting point for our conversation, not something to fit with our pre-existing conceptions.

But we must not ignore these conceptions. These too must be interrogated and the nuance explored. The caricature of teacher-led instruction as turgid and dull must be dispelled. Rosenshine's [Principles of Instruction](#) make clear that teacher-led instruction should be interactive. These evidence-based principles suggest that teachers, amongst other things:

- ask a large number of questions and check pupil responses; and
- provide models and worked examples.

And the evidence from PISA 2015 supports these findings. According to the data, the most successful science classrooms were those where teachers explained scientific ideas, discussed pupil responses to questions and clearly demonstrated an idea.

Rosenshine's principles, which draw heavily on cognitive science, are backed up by the PISA 2015 data.

Reflecting on the relationship between researchers and teachers in the conclusion to his 2002 essay [Classroom Research and Cargo Cults](#), E. D. Hirsch – the educationalist who has most influenced my thinking – stressed the need for this relationship to evolve.

Drawing on the comments of a colleague, he laid out his vision for cognitive science research and teaching practice to mirror the relationship between biochemistry and medical science.

In England, it is clear that schools are beginning to take this ambition to heart. The Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL), whose General Secretary Carl Ward is here today, and PTE, Parents and Teachers for Excellence, a pressure group calling for more subject knowledge in the curriculum – and whose CEO Mark Lehain is also here – together they organised

a pamphlet to support teachers to adopt a knowledge-rich curriculum.

In this pamphlet, titled [The Question of Knowledge](#), Luke Sparkes – headteacher of Dixons Trinity Academy – explained how that school uses cognitive science to inform their curriculum planning:

A knowledge-based curriculum is about harnessing the power of cognitive science, identifying each marginal gain and acting upon it; having the humility to keep refining schemes of work, long term plans and generating better assessments.

Examples such as this show that Tom Bennett is right; teachers demanding better evidence is slowly changing education.

Thank you.