

## Briefing: The Importance of Teaching

**December 2010**

The government has announced a wide-ranging series of reforms to education with the launch of the new Schools White Paper, [The Importance of Teaching](#). This briefing summarises its proposals and provides some commentary on its potential implications for Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) pupils. We would like to hear any thoughts you have about the White Paper. If you would like a staff member from ROTA to come to your organisation to discuss in more detail with you or your colleagues what the White Paper might mean, please contact Barbara Nea, Senior Policy Officer, on 020 7902 1177 or [Barbara@rota.org.uk](mailto:Barbara@rota.org.uk).

### Overview

The White Paper aims to:

- Strengthen the status of teachers and teaching
- Reinforce the standards set by the curriculum and qualifications
- Give schools greater freedom
- Make schools more accountable to parents
- Help schools to learn more from good practice elsewhere
- Enable young people to stay in education and training until the age of 18.

It has a strong emphasis on the improvement of standards in schools and narrowing the attainment gap between wealthier and poorer pupils. ROTA welcomes the White Paper's emphasis on the need to address attainment gaps and educational disadvantage. We are pleased that Local Authorities will be required to provide full-time educational provision for all pupils who are not attending mainstream education. We also agree that the amount of regulation and guidance that schools must adhere to limits their ability to teach effectively. However, we are deeply concerned with the lack of emphasis in the White Paper on race equality and the duties schools should adhere to in relation to the Equality Act 2010. We believe that longstanding disproportionate outcomes in education for some BAME groups will be compound. Therefore, race equality is an exceptional area where central government should continue to play a strong leadership role, given the acute inequalities that persist and which are demonstrated in the following facts and figures.

- At 16 Pakistani, Black African and Black Caribbean boys in England have results well below average. Children of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma backgrounds have assessments that fall further behind during the school years resulting in much worse results at 16 than others. This gap appears to have widened in recent years.<sup>i</sup> Even when socio-economic factors are taken into consideration, there are still differences in the average attainment levels of different ethnic groups.
- Those from ethnic groups with GCSE results around or below the national median are much more likely to continue on to higher education than white British pupils with similar results. However, Black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils are less likely to go to more prestigious universities or to get higher class degrees. Low income acts as a barrier to post compulsory education. Improved educational achievement even at higher education levels for a number of BAME groups is not translating into labour market outcomes.
- Exclusion rates among Gypsy, Traveller and Roma pupils are around four times the rate for all pupils. Rates for black Caribbean, black other, white and black Caribbean and white and black African pupils are also significantly higher than average.<sup>ii</sup> Research by the former Department for Education and Skills argued that these disproportionate exclusion rates are partly attributable to conscious and unconscious prejudice from teachers.<sup>iii</sup> Disadvantages caused by exclusion are exacerbated because education provided through pupil referral units is often of poor quality.<sup>iv</sup>

As such, our major concern in relation to the White Paper is the lack of acknowledgement of inequality in education or reference to equalities legislation. We are concerned about the lack of clarity about proposals to remove statutory duties and requirements that the government does not think need to be a legal requirement. It is essential that inequalities in educational access, outcomes and experience of BAME communities continue to be monitored and that equalities legislation continues to protect BAME pupils. It is also necessary that schools adhere to their duties under equalities legislation. The government needs to consider this in the review of guidance for schools proposed by the White Paper.

Additionally, as will be explained later, the following proposals are causing us concern because of their likely negative impact on BAME pupils:

- The proposals around behaviour and discipline relating to detention, searching and exclusion
- The expansion of free schools and academies, without full consideration of the risks that this entails
- The lack of clarity about where funds for the Pupil Premium are coming from and commitment to ring-fencing it to ensure it reaches the most disadvantaged pupils
- The likely removal of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant leaves very little in the way of addressing this type of disadvantage
- The lack of clarity about how schools will be accountable
- The increased value being placed on academic achievement at the expense of other importance aspects of schooling including personal, social, health, economic and citizenship education and vocational training.

We consider each section of the White Paper below.

## **1. Teaching and leadership**

The White Paper proposes to make teaching and school leadership more attractive by reducing central government prescription. Consequently, the paper proposes that the government will review and reduce all existing guidance to produce “a simple, definitive suite of guidance”.

It also includes proposals that aim to draw teachers from among the top graduates and improve the training that is available to them. Two key improvements are more training in the classroom and career-long professional development.

It includes proposals to add incentives for high achieving teachers to work in schools in disadvantaged areas, including the Pupil Premium and specialised training through Teach First.

The White Paper includes proposals to encourage Armed Forces leavers to become teachers by sponsoring them to train as teachers and working with universities to explore the possibility of establishing a bespoke compressed undergraduate route into teaching for Armed Forces leavers lacking degrees. It is also proposed that the government provide opportunities for Armed Forces leavers to act as mentors for young people.

### **Potential impact on BAME pupils**

Teacher training and development should ensure a focus on equalities to enable teachers to meet the requirements of schools’ equality duties and to respond to rapidly changing demographics in many parts of the UK.<sup>1</sup>

We are disappointed to see no mention of the BAME workforce amidst the special emphasis on creating accessible routes to teaching for former members of the Armed Forces. Targets for BAME

support this aspect of schools. We have concerns about the assumptions that good pastoral systems already exist in schools. Recent evidence from our Female Voice in Violence project, which interviewed 350 women and girls affected by association with gangs, demonstrates that this is not really the case. There is limited connection between mainstream schools, the BAME voluntary and community sector and other service providers that should be able to provide additional support to those who need it.

## **2. Behaviour**

The White Paper proposes to:

- Place a stronger focus on teacher training, and in professional development, on managing behaviour
- Strengthen head teachers' authority to maintain discipline beyond the school gates. The government will issue statutory guidance to extend head teachers' powers to punish school pupils who misbehave on their way to or from school
- Empower head teachers to take a strong stand against bullying, especially racist, homophobic, sexist and other prejudice-based bullying
- Increase the authority of teachers to discipline pupils by strengthening their powers to search pupils, issue same day detentions and use reasonable force where necessary
- Change the current system of independent appeals panels for exclusions so that they take less time; this is also purported to reduce worries head teachers face over the possible reinstatement of pupils who have committed a serious offence
- Trial a new approach to exclusions where schools have new responsibilities for the ongoing education and care of excluded children
- Improve the quality of alternative provision, encouraging new providers to set up alternative provision free schools
- Protect teachers from malicious allegations – speeding up investigations and legislating to grant teachers anonymity when accused by pupils
- Focus Ofsted inspection more strongly on behaviour and safety, including bullying, as one of four key areas of inspections.

In this section, there is one of the limited references in the White Paper to inequality in relation to BAME pupils: "We must also address serious issues of inequality – both black boys and pupils receiving free school meals are three times more likely to be excluded than average. Giving teachers the power to intervene early and firmly to tackle disruptive behaviour can get these children's lives back on track. And by improving the quality of education for those children who are excluded we can ensure they are given a necessary second chance, and provided with the means to turn their lives around."

### **Potential impact on BAME pupils**

Certain groups of BAME pupils have always fared worse under behaviour management policies and as such we have grave concerns about many of the proposals in this section of the White Paper.

We are also concerned about the proposals in relation to same day detention and its effect on child protection issues. Our work on Serious Youth Violence, for example, allows us to predict that if their young people do not return home as expected due to detention, this is likely to cause a great deal of anxiety and concern among the families of those living in areas where there are issues around Serious Youth Violence.

We are pleased to see reference to racist bullying which continues to impact on the educational experience of many BAME young people. However, we are not confident, due to the removal of requirements on schools to report racist incidents, that this will be enforced.

We are pleased the need to address inequality in relation to exclusion is acknowledged. This acknowledgement, however, is not backed up with adequate measures to address it. The paragraph which recognises that black boys face higher than average rates of exclusion shifts the blame for this squarely on the shoulders of those who are excluded. It fails to acknowledge that there is much evidence that schools have a significant role to play in this inequality. In this section the White Paper reveals a misunderstanding of the nature of inequality in schools, which is particularly worrying alongside proposals to allow schools discretion in relation to the use of 'reasonable force' and the weakening of independent exclusion appeals processes. There is a need for any use of 'reasonable force' to be carefully monitored in terms of use on different social and ethnic groups. Additionally, there is a need for teacher training and development to better support teachers to manage difference.

We are pleased the White Paper acknowledges that those being educated in alternative provision are amongst the most vulnerable in our society and that around half of them are there, not because they have been excluded, but because, for some reason, mainstream education is not suitable for them. We are also pleased with the emphasis placed on providing early and additional support to those who might be at risk of exclusion. However, there is a need for greater clarity and thought about what exactly this involves. We hope this does not result in those who have additional support needs being dumped in unsuitable alternative education where the services provided is of poor quality. We are worried the White Paper's proposals will undo previous efforts towards reducing exclusions. The incentives to encourage alternative behavioural management approaches to exclusion are weak. In fact, we believe, in practice, the White Paper will incentivise exclusion and that this will have a tragic impact on many vulnerable young people. As a result, we believe there is considerable risk that the proposals will lead to a segregated schools system where vulnerable young people are placed in alternative systems where current evidence indicates there is a significant risk of poorer services leading to poorer outcomes for pupils.

We are pleased with the proposals to require local authorities to provide a full time education to all pupils that are being educated in alternative provision. However, we believe that if there are groups of pupils that have not been excluded but who are not attending mainstream schools for other reasons, the first emphasis should be on addressing these reasons. We know for example that there are large numbers of certain groups of BAME pupils, such as Irish Travellers, who are self-excluding because they are being bullied or harassed in school. It is unacceptable simply to accept this situation. Reasons for this must be addressed within mainstream schools and support to such groups should be targeted to make mainstream provision accessible to them. We know that

the erosion of Travellers' Education Services will have a negative impact on the access that Gypsies, Travellers and Roma children and young people have to mainstream education.

We are pleased with the acknowledgement of the role of voluntary and community sector organisations in providing alternative provision to pupils that are not in mainstream education. In addition, we are pleased with the recognition that local authorities may have contracting processes that make it difficult for this sector to engage more fully in providing alternative provision. We are aware of many BAME organisations providing excellent provision to groups of young people that have been excluded. While we believe emphasis should be placed on non-exclusion and making mainstream education as accessible as possible, we believe that where the only option is for pupils to be educated through alternative provision, it would be beneficial to have BAME VCS organisations with specialist expertise relevant to those who have been excluded positioned to provide alternative provision.

We are pleased with the proposal to give local authorities the responsibility to secure full-time education for pupils that are not in mainstream education. We are deeply concerned with the proposal to shift the responsibility for quality assurance of these alternative education services for excluded pupils from local authorities to the schools themselves. We believe this could lead to tragic consequences for the most vulnerable young people.

There is a need for greater clarity about the proposal to enable head teachers to maintain discipline outside the school gates.

If proposals around discipline and behaviour are to go forward, it is essential there is investment for training for staff. This training should include awareness of risks of institutional racism in the implementation of behaviour management policies and procedures.

There is a need for greater clarity about the 'four key areas' of Ofsted inspection. It is essential that Ofsted maintains and strengthens its focus on race equality.

### **3. New School System**

This section of the White Paper considers some of the successes academies and City Technology Colleges (CTCs) have had in raising achievement in education. It claims that those on free school meals who attend such schools do twice as well as the national average for pupils on free school meals.

It proposes programmes that will encourage schools to work with each other to improve. Highest performing schools will be able to convert directly to academies status but will have to work with less successful schools to help them improve. Other schools will be able to become academies by joining federations or chains.

Teachers, parents and charities will be able to open new schools where there is a clear demand for something not offered at the moment.

The White Paper also proposes to:

- Restore for all academies the freedoms they originally had while continuing to ensure a level playing field on admissions particularly in relation to children with Special Educational Needs
- Ensure that the lowest performing schools, attaining poorly and in an Ofsted category or not improving, are considered for conversion to become academies to effect educational transformation
- Ensure that there is support for schools increasingly to collaborate through academy chains and multi-school trusts and federations
- Give local authorities a strong strategic role as champions for parents, families and vulnerable pupils - they will promote educational excellence by co-ordinating fair admissions, ensuring a good supply of high quality school places and developing their own school improvement strategies to support local schools.

#### **Potential impact on BAME pupils**

The information included about the performance of academies and free schools does not paint the full picture. There is evidence that race inequality in many existing academies, of which there are about 200, is more severe than in existing mainstream schools. In particular there are even higher rates of exclusion of certain groups of BAME pupils from academies (Gillborn and Drew, 2010). Evidence of similar inequalities, and ethnic and socio-economic segregation in schools, particularly in deprived areas, is also available in relation to the similar models of Charter Schools in the US and free schools in Sweden.<sup>2</sup> To minimise the risks of similar issues arising with the expansion of free schools and academies, we recommend the introduction of an additional fund, linked to but separate from the Pupil Premium, aimed at encouraging and enabling disadvantaged parents and communities to take advantage of the opportunities provided by current educational reforms.

If Local authorities are to have a strong strategic role in relation to education, consideration of the Equality Act 2010 should be central to this role.

## **4. Accountability**

The White Paper includes proposals to:

- Make publicly available all the information which underpins its statistical publications data about attainment in specific subjects, trends over time, class sizes, attendance levels, the composition of the pupil body and financial information
- Place information on expenditure online, including the amount allocated per pupil
- Reform performance tables so that they set out high expectations; every pupil should have a broad education (the English Baccalaureate), a firm grip of the basics and show progress - this includes ending the current Contextual Added Value measure which currently enables schools working in challenging circumstances, where academic results are likely to be lower than average, to demonstrate their value

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<sup>2</sup> Runnymede Trust (2010) A A A A

- Institute a new measure of how well deprived pupils perform and introduce a measure of how young people do when they leave school
- Reform Ofsted inspection, so that inspectors spend more time in the classroom and focus on key issues of educational effectiveness
- Establish a new 'floor standard' for primary and secondary schools, which sets an escalating minimum expectation for attainment
- Make it easier for schools to adopt models of governance which work for them, including smaller, more focused governing bodies, which clearly hold the school to account for children's progress.

Existing measures of teacher performance and conduct will be reviewed, including the current professional standards for teachers and the General Teaching Council for England's (GTCE) code of conduct and practice, to establish clear and unequivocal standards.

### **Potential impact on BAME pupils**

We are pleased with the proposal to 'make publicly available data about attainment in specific subjects, trends over time, class sizes, attendance levels, the composition of the pupils body and financial information. These statistical publications have been critical in highlighting the extent of inequality within the education system. It is important that performance is measured in relation to equality of access, experience and outcomes for BAME pupils. There is also a need for greater clarity in the document about this. We know that there is a strong racial element to educational disadvantage in many areas and that targeted interventions are required in response. Without data delineating the nature and extent of inequalities, it is not possible to develop effective responses and meet obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

Additionally, there is a need for greater clarity about how accountability will work in practice and what penalties there will be for poor performance.

Staff performance should include consideration of equalities.

In terms of proposed changes to governance arrangements, it is essential that parents representing the diversity of schools' pupil populations are involved to ensure full accountability. The White Paper should include more detail about this.

## **5. Curriculum and qualifications**

The White Paper proposes to:

- Review the National Curriculum, with the aim of reducing prescription and allowing schools to decide how to teach, while refocusing on the core subject knowledge that every pupil should gain at each stage of their education
- Ensure that there is support available to schools for the teaching of systematic synthetic phonics
- Ensure that there is proper assessment of pupils at each vital transitional stage of their education



- Provide information to parents about their child's progress
- Provide information about the effectiveness of schools
- Provide objective evidence for teachers
- Introduce the English Baccalaureate to encourage schools to offer a broad set of academic subjects to age 16, whether or not pupils then go down an academic or vocational route
- Hold an independent review of key stage two testing, seeking to retain a strong basis for accountability and information to parents and secondary schools, while alleviating the damaging effects of over-rehearsal of tests
- Reform vocational education so that it supports progression to further and higher education and employment
- Overhaul our vocational qualifications following Professor Alison Wolf's review to ensure that they match the world's best
- Raise to 17 by 2013 and then 18 by 2015 the age to which all young people will be expected to participate in education or training.

Academies and free schools will retain the freedom they have at the moment to depart from aspects of the National Curriculum. But they will be required by law, like all schools, to teach a broad and balanced curriculum.

Schools will be ranked higher for the number of pupils taking GCSEs in five core subjects - English, maths, science, a language, and a humanities' subject.

The White Paper acknowledges the importance of sex and relationships education, Personal Social Health and Economic (PSHE) education and the need for some exploration of wider social issues which contribute to the well-being and engagement of pupils in schools. It proposes that the government will develop sex and relationships education and Personal Social Health and Economic (PSHE) education. It lays out how the government can support schools while giving teachers greater flexibility in how they deliver PSHE education.

### **Potential impact on BAME pupils**

Focusing on five academic subjects will lead schools to focus more resources on more academic pupils. This has implications in terms of race equality for groups that have been traditionally disadvantaged in education and which have, on average, lower attainment levels. There is a need to make sure that the educational aspirations and achievements which may not correspond to national averages are valued, recognised and rewarded.

ROTA welcomes the renewed emphasis on improving the quality of vocational education and matching it with the requirements of employers. However, emphasis on performance in GCSEs and the English Baccalaureate creates a divide in terms of status between academic and vocational qualifications, which needs to be addressed.

There is not enough clarity about what exactly will be removed from and maintained within the national curriculum and there is a need for further information about this.

Citizenship education is important in terms of raising awareness relevant to improving race equality and community cohesion in schools and wider society. It is important that this element of education is maintained. Additionally, it is important that the work of key BAME individuals are considered throughout the education of subjects such as science and that geography and history are relevant to the pupil populations of our schools.

We are pleased with the acknowledgement of the importance of sex and relationships education (SRE), as well as Personal Social Health and Economic Education (PSHE). However, we have concerns that guidance around this will be removed. Guidance is needed to support teachers to overcome generation gaps and understand some of the issues that young people face today, particularly young people with whom they may not share a similar background. Our Female Voice in Violence project, which looks at the impact of Serious Youth Violence on women and girls, has highlighted an urgent need and opportunity to support young women who may be victimised through education. This issue is so complex and so alien to the experience of many teachers who may work with gang-affected young women that they will need some sort of guidance and support around this. This issue also highlights the need for schools to work with voluntary and community sector organisations that reflect their pupil populations on developing appropriate programmes for these subjects.

The renewed emphasis on modern languages is an advantage for many migrant families. There is a need for the government to ensure that all foreign languages are recognised within GCSEs to ensure the language skills of pupils from migrant families are recognised.

## **6. Accountability**

The White Paper says that the power shift to the frontline needs to be accompanied by a streamlined and effective accountability system. It proposes to re-focus Ofsted inspections on teaching and learning and 'to strengthen the performance measures we use to hold schools accountable'.

### **Potential impact on BAME pupils**

There is lack of clarity about how this new form of accountability will work in practice.

## **7. School improvement**

The White Paper proposes to:

- Make clear that schools – governors, head teachers and teachers – have responsibility for improvement; the requirement for every school to have a local authority school improvement partner (SIP) and the current centralised target-setting process will end
- Increase the number of National and Local Leaders of Education – head teachers of excellent schools committed to supporting other schools – and develop Teaching Schools to make sure that every school has access to highly effective professional development support
- Make it easier for schools to learn from one another and to access evidence of best practice, high-quality materials and improvement services which they can choose to use

- Free local authorities to provide whatever forms of improvement support they choose
- Ensure that schools below the floor standard receive support, and ensure that those which are seriously failing, or unable to improve their results, are transformed through conversion to academy status
- Encourage local authorities and schools to bring forward applications to the new Education Endowment Fund for funding for innovative projects to raise the attainment of deprived children in underperforming schools
- Establish a new collaboration incentive, which financially rewards schools which effectively support weaker schools and demonstrably improve their performance.

### **Potential impact on BAME pupils**

We are concerned that central government initiatives to address educational inequality are being eroded. For example, we are concerned about the termination of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant, which has had positive impact for BAME pupils.

We are pleased with the emphasis on encouraging the sharing of best practice. Best practice around addressing some of the issues that disproportionately impact on BAME pupils, for example, exclusion, under-attainment and absence, should be included.

We welcome the introduction of the Education Endowment Fund. While we were disappointed with the decision earlier this year not to extend free school meals, we are pleased to note that the money that had been allocated to it by the previous government would still be targeted at addressing educational disadvantage.

We are concerned the proposed performance measures, which over-emphasise academic achievement, will disadvantage many excellent schools working with pupils that face disadvantage, among which BAME pupils are over-represented.

We welcome the emphasis on school-based and school-led support for school improvement. However, there is a need for central leadership, particularly in relation to equality.

## **8. Schools funding**

The White Paper proposes to:

- Target more resources on the most deprived pupils over the next four years, through a new Pupil Premium - in total, £2.5 billion per year will be spent through the Pupil Premium by the end of the Spending Review period
- Consult on developing and introducing a new national funding formula, based on the needs of pupils, to work alongside the Pupil Premium
- In the meantime, increase the transparency of the current funding system by showing both how much money schools receive and what they spend their funds on
- End the disparity in funding for 16–18 year-olds, so that schools and colleges are funded at the same levels as one another

