



# High expectations and standards for all, no matter what: the leadership challenge for a world-class education service

**Michael Barber, Department for Education and Employment**

This paper provides an overview of the Blair government's approach to education reform.

- **Section 1** describes the vision, opportunity and overall strategic approach known as 'high challenge, high support'
- **Section 2** describes the framework for continuous improvement which is similar to what Americans call 'standards-based reform'
- **Section 3** describes the national literacy and numeracy strategies, which are designed to bring urgent and substantial improvement in reading, writing and maths at elementary level
- **Section 4** examines the transformation of secondary education, including the policies to improve performance in the middle years and bring both equity and diversity to secondary schools in large cities
- **Section 5** examines the radical modernisation of the teaching profession which is currently being put in place
- **Section 6** examines the problems of implementing large scale reform
- **Section 7** concludes the paper by raising four emerging issues which education reformers will find it necessary to consider

## Section 1: The vision

The determination of the Blair government to pursue education reform and bring about a step change in the performance of the education service is not in doubt. Ever since it was elected in May 1997, the Labour government has sought, with passion and purpose, to turn into a reality of Blair's commitment in opposition to make "education, education and education" his three priorities. (The recent commitment of Governor Paul Patton of Kentucky to make his four priorities "education, education, education and education" simply raises the stakes!)

Our vision is a world-class education service – one which matches the best anywhere on the planet. We want to see it achieved, not at some indeterminate date in the future, but as soon as possible within the decade that has just begun. Our sense of urgency comes, not just from the belief that every passing day when a child's education is less than optimal is another day lost,

but also from the belief that time is running out for public education to prove its worth. The danger is that, as the economies of developed countries grow, more and more people will see private education for their children as a rational lifestyle option. If this were to occur, they would become less and less willing to pay taxes to fund public education, which over time would become, in the devastating phrase of the sociologist Richard Titmuss a generation ago, a poor service for poor people. It is hard to imagine how social cohesion could be achieved and how cascading ever-growing inequality from one generation to another could be prevented under these circumstances.

Only if public education delivers, and is seen to deliver real quality, can this unwelcome prospect be avoided. We believe that successful reform is possible, that public education can meet the needs and aspirations (not just the needs) of all students in our diverse, modern societies, and that it need not take forever. That is the vision before us.

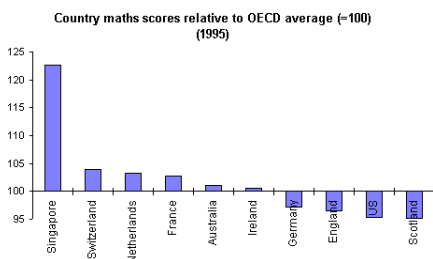
## The opportunity

In England we have an opportunity, possibly unique, to achieve that vision across an entire system of 24,000 schools and 7 million students. The government has a large majority and real power. Expenditure on education is increasing in real terms year on year (over five per cent real growth last year, over 8 per cent this year, and three further years of real growth already promised).

The decisive factor in whether or not we are successful will be leadership – at government level, at intermediate and local level, but above all at school level. We need leaders who understand the vision and the goals, who understand the meaning of leadership in the early 21st century and who have the skills not only to improve schools but to transform them. These are relatively easy words to write, but the challenges they convey are immense. This paper is designed to explain the big picture of education reform in England and thus to set the context for leadership development and the new National College for School Leadership.

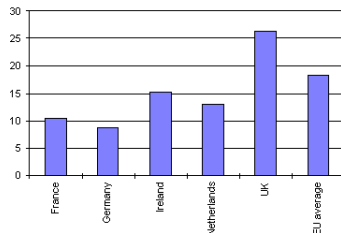
Furthermore, a combination of macroeconomic policy and changes in the tax and benefits system will mean that, by the end of this fiscal year, over 1.2 million children will have been taken out of poverty since May 1997 with obvious benefits for education itself. If it is not possible to reform education successfully in these favourable circumstances, it is hard to imagine when it would be.

In seeking to achieve this vision we are highly conscious of our starting point. In a 1995 study of adult literacy the UK fell behind most European countries and Australia, performing similarly to the United States. On maths for 13-year-olds (in the 1995 TIMSS), England fell below the OECD average, as the graph below illustrates.

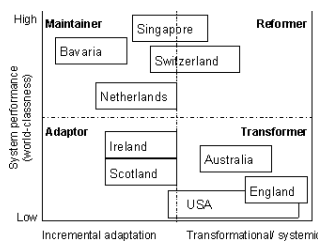


Meanwhile the proportion leaving school unqualified or with low levels of qualification is unacceptably high compared to other developed countries.

Proportion of young people (15-24) having left education with a low level of qualifications (1997)



Clearly, this relatively poor starting point provides a greater impetus to reform. The extent to which any given government seeks a transformative approach to reform is influenced by both this starting point in terms of performance and its degree of ambition. After comparing our reform to eight others we arrived at the following categorisation.

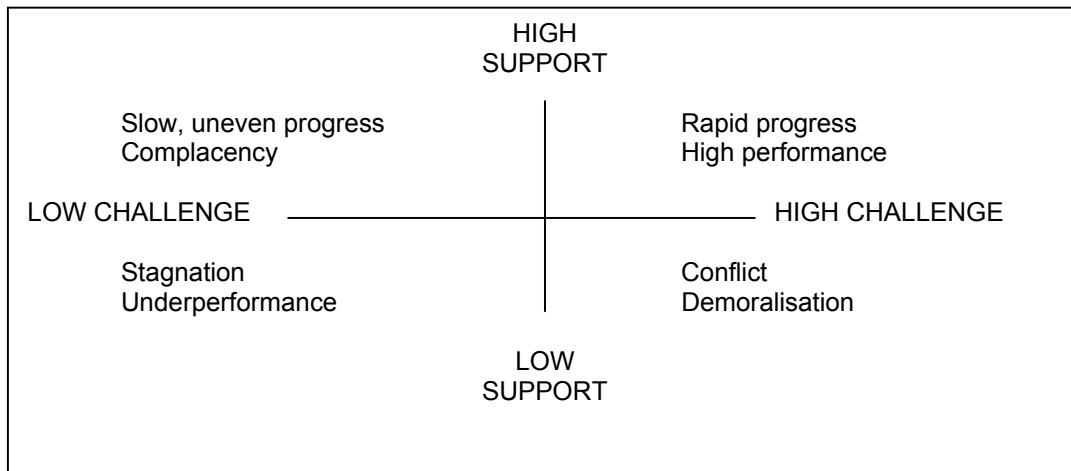


This explains in part why we in England are so keen to learn from experience in the USA - a fellow transformer - and why there is such strong support for our reform among the electorate.

In the modern world, though, electorates are fickle and impatient. They do not take the words of politicians on trust. Why should they? They may be prepared to give a new government a little time to settle in, but only a little. Much as they might share the long-term vision of a world-class education service, they will not wait patiently for 5 or 10 years to see if it is delivered. They want immediate evidence that it is on the way. Hence the central paradox facing education reformers in a democracy – a long-term strategy will only succeed if it delivers short-term results.

### High challenge: high support

In order to move from the evidently underperforming system of the mid-1990s to the world-class vision, and to do so while generating short-term results, we have developed a policy approach best described as 'high challenge, high support', which is illustrated below:



It is possible, by generalising ruthlessly, to see this diagram representing 25 years of educational history in England: 10 years of low challenge and low support until, in the mid-1980s, the Thatcher government turned its formidable attention to the problems of the education service. Their answer? Increase the challenge: new standards, new tests, new school inspection, new publication of school test scores. Ten years of 'high challenge, low support' followed. The increased challenge was not matched by investment in teachers' pay, smaller classes, improved technology, professional development or better school buildings. Nor was enough done to address the social circumstances which, particularly in declining industrial areas and large cities, made the job of educators daily more difficult. The result was some improvement but also conflict and demoralisation. During those conflicts, many educators waited for the election of a Labour government which, the historical evidence suggested, would reduce the challenge and increase the support. But the Blair government did not believe the old approach would deliver either long-term vision or short-term results. Instead it built on the Conservative government's reforms, sharpened the challenge and, crucially, added the support. Hence: high challenge, high support.

The principles of this approach can be summarised quickly.

#### **All students can achieve**

- Set high standards and expect every student to meet them.
- Recognise that for some students, in some circumstances, reaching those high standards is more difficult: give them the extra assistance and time they need.

Lois Easton, writing in *Education Week* (12 April 2000), summarised this approach excellently: if standards of achievement are the constant, then all the other factors in the equation – time, place, teaching approach and resources – must become variables.

#### **Don't compromise on quality: invest in it**

- Expect schools and teachers to do an excellent job. Hold them to account for their performance.
- Reward success, challenge failure.

- Recognise that if teachers are to perform excellently they need the encouragement, the rewards, the support, the materials, the buildings and, above all, the professional development that makes sustained excellence possible.
- Recognise that, for some schools and some pupils, the challenge of meeting high standards is more demanding, and provide the necessary targeted support.

**A government that demands quality must provide it too**

- Constantly restate the big picture, and strategically manage reform so that the substantial demands of radical change are seen by principals and teachers as an investment in a better future rather than a series of unconnected initiatives which are here today and gone tomorrow.
- Create a culture in which everyone takes responsibility for student outcomes, including the Secretary of State for Education, and in which problems, however intractable, are out in the open being tackled rather than being swept under the carpet.
- Invest steadily and ensure that – to use the Blair soundbite – all money is for modernisation.

## Section 2: The framework for continuous improvement

The way in which these principles of high challenge, high support are turned into practical policies which will drive school improvement is summarised in the following diagram.



The policies for each segment (starting at 12 o'clock) are set out in the following chart.

<p><b>Ambitious standards</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• high standards set out in the national curriculum</li> <li>• national tests at ages 7, 11, 14, 16</li> <li>• detailed teaching programmes based on best practice</li> <li>• optional world-class tests based on the best 10 per cent in the 1995 TIMSS</li> </ul>
<p><b>Devolved responsibility</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• school as unit of accountability</li> <li>• devolution of resources and employment powers to schools</li> <li>• pupil-led formula funding</li> <li>• open enrolment</li> </ul>

<p><b>Good data and clear targets</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• individual pupil-level data collected nationally</li> <li>• analysis of performance in national tests</li> <li>• benchmark data annually for every school</li> <li>• comparisons to all other schools with similar intake</li> <li>• statutory target-setting at district and school level</li> </ul>
<p><b>Access to best practice and quality professional development</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• universal professional development in national priorities (literacy, numeracy, ICT)</li> <li>• leadership development as an entitlement</li> <li>• standards site (<a href="#">go to this site</a>)</li> <li>• Beacon schools</li> <li>• LEA (district) responsibility</li> <li>• devolved funding for professional development at school level</li> <li>• reform of education research</li> </ul>
<p><b>Accountability</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• national inspection system for schools and LEAs (districts)</li> <li>• every school inspected every 4–6 years</li> <li>• all inspection reports published</li> <li>• publication annually of school/district level performance data and targets</li> </ul>

**Intervention in inverse proportion to success (rewards, assistance, consequences)**

For successful schools:

- Beacon status
- celebration events
- recognition
- school achievement awards scheme
- greater autonomy

For all schools:

- post-inspection action plan
- school improvement grant to assist implementation of action plan
- monitoring of performance by LEA (district)

For underperforming schools:

- more prescriptive action plan
- possible withdrawal of devolved budget and responsibility
- national and LEA monitoring of performance
- additional funding to assist turnaround (but only for practical improvement measures)



	<p>For failing schools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• as for underperforming schools, plus:</li> <li>• early consideration of closure</li> <li>• district plan for school with target date for completing turnround (maximum two years)</li> <li>• national monitoring three times a year</li> <li>• possible fresh start or city academy</li> </ul>
	<p>For failing LEAs (districts):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• intervention from central government</li> <li>• possible contracting-out of functions to the private sector</li> </ul>

There are many parallels between this approach and what is known in the United States as 'standards-based reform'. The policies pursued with considerable success in Kentucky, North Carolina, Texas and Philadelphia, for example, have strikingly similar characteristics. Not least because of the evidence from places such as these, we are confident that in the medium and long term this framework for continuous improvement will work.

The emerging evidence reinforces our confidence:

- the number of failing schools has fallen
- the average time it takes to turn a failing school round has dropped from 25 months to under 18 months
- the percentage of students meeting standards at 16 and 18 has risen slowly but steadily
- the percentage of students leaving school with no qualifications has dropped significantly (from 8 per cent of the cohort to less than 6 per cent), though it is still too high

Our welcome for this progress (not to mention relief) is tempered by the knowledge that it is neither rapid nor dramatic enough to convince us, or more importantly the citizens of our country, that we are on track to achieve world-class standards within the next few years. In order to achieve the step change we require in addition, three broad strategies have been developed and implemented, each one of which is aligned with and reinforces the framework for continuous improvement:

- the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies at primary (elementary) level
- the transformation of secondary education
- the modernisation of the teaching profession

### **Section 3: The national literacy and numeracy strategies**

Our education system will never be world-class unless virtually all children learn to read, write and calculate to high standards before they leave primary (elementary) school. At the time of the 1997 election, the national data showed how far we were from achieving this goal. Only just over half of 11-year-olds were meeting the standards set for their age in literacy and numeracy.

During the period 1996–97, Labour in opposition developed a national strategy to tackle this dire state of affairs immediately after an election. Within a few days of that election, therefore, the new government was able to set ambitious national targets for the year 2002: that in literacy 80 per cent and numeracy 75 per cent of 11-year-olds should meet the standards set for their age. These targets are staging posts on the way to even higher levels of performance by the middle of this decade.

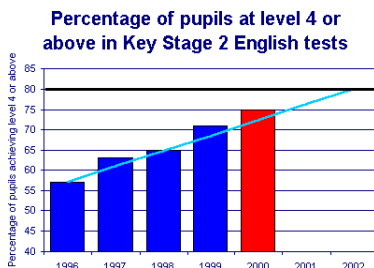
Our assumption, based on a review of the international research, is that about 80 per cent of children will achieve those standards simply as a result of being taught well by teachers who know, understand and are able to use proven best practice. A further 15 per cent have a good chance of meeting the standards if, in addition, they receive extra small-group tuition should they fall behind their peers. The remaining five per cent are likely to need one-to-one tuition from time to time, preferably early in their school careers (ie before age eight). Some of these will prove able to meet the standards: for a very small percentage we do not yet have the knowledge or the capacity to enable them to meet the standards but, for sure, we won't give up trying.

To achieve these ambitious objectives we have progressively put in place what the leading Canadian educator, Michael Fullan, has called the most ambitious, comprehensive and aligned national strategies anywhere in the world. The chief elements of the strategies are as follows:

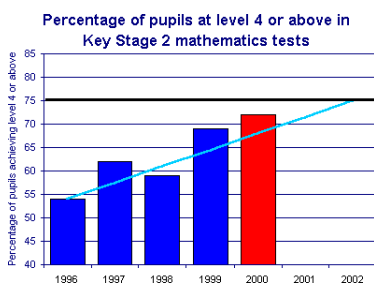
- a nationally-prepared project plan for both literacy and numeracy, setting out actions, responsibilities and deadlines through to 2002
- a substantial investment sustained over at least six years and skewed towards those schools which need most help
- a project infrastructure involving national direction from the Standards and Effectiveness Unit, 15 regional directors and over 300 expert consultants at local level for each of the two strategies
- an expectation that every class will have a daily maths lesson and a daily literacy hour
- a detailed teaching programme covering every school year from age 5–11
- an emphasis on early intervention and catch-up for pupils who fall behind

- a professional development programme designed to enable every primary teacher to learn to understand and use proven best practice in both curriculum areas
- the appointment of over 2,000 leading maths teachers and hundreds of expert literacy teachers, who have the time and skill to model best practice for their peers
- the provision of intensive support to around half of all schools where the most progress is required
- a major investment in books for schools (over 23 million new books in the system since May 1997)
- the removal of barriers to implementation (especially a huge reduction in prescribed curriculum content outside the core subjects)
- regular monitoring and extensive evaluation by our national inspection agency, Ofsted
- a national curriculum for initial teacher training, requiring all providers to prepare new primary teachers to teach the daily maths lesson and the literacy hour
- a problem-solving philosophy involving early identification of difficulties as they emerge and the provision of rapid solutions or intervention where necessary
- the provision of extra after-school, weekend and holiday booster classes for those who need extra help to reach the standard

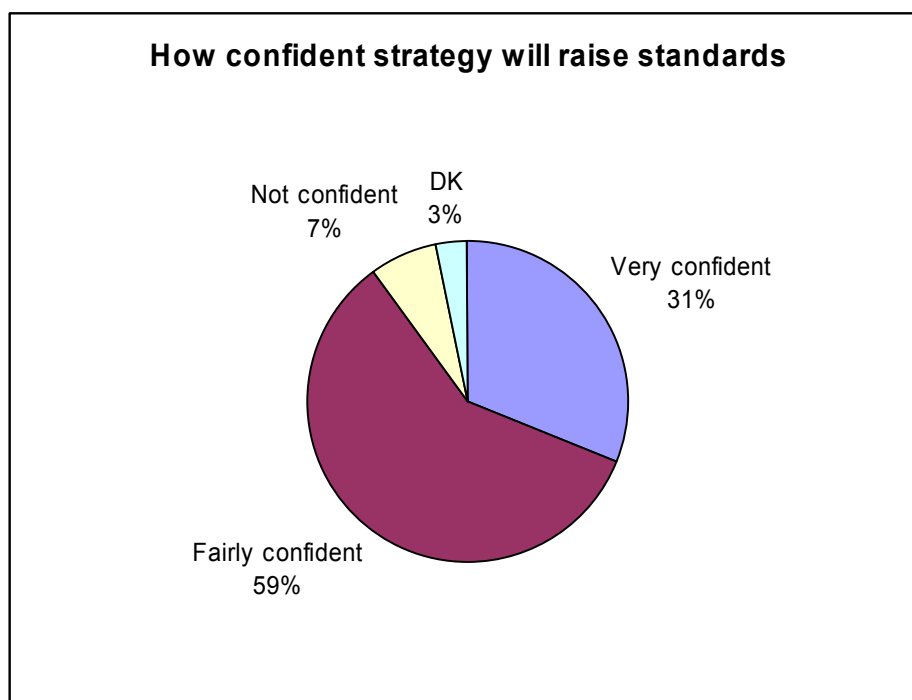
The impact of the strategies so far is evident in the national test results over the last three years. The first graph shows the progress towards our 2002 target in literacy.



The second graph shows the impact of the government's numeracy strategy, with a fall in 1998 when a new mental arithmetic element was introduced to the test, followed by a large rise in 1999.



In my job you are, like the manager of a sports team, only as good as your most recent results. Earlier this month all 700,000 11-year-olds in England took the year 2000 tests. These results will be crucial to the credibility of the government reforms. It is important to remember, though, that test results are only a representation. In the case of the tests we use they are a good representation, but what matters most is the reality of what students in schools know, understand and are able to do. The most heartening evidence so far of the impact of the strategy is not last year's test scores but the fact that teachers and heads can see the difference from day to day in the capacity of their students. The diagram below, taken from an independent opinion poll, show what primary headteachers think about the impact of the strategies on standards. Sixty per cent believe the literacy programme has had "quite a lot of impact" or more. In numeracy they are more positive still.



Secondary headteachers confirm these findings; they can see the difference in their new cohorts. The progress so far is only the beginning. Our intention is to pursue the strategies consistently, to refine them constantly, and to invest in professional development for primary teachers through to 2004 at least. Each year the professional development programme will be based on analysis of what pupils and teachers have (and have not) been able to do well in the previous year. Precision-targeting of professional development across a system is, I believe, one of our most important strategy innovations, ensuring both quality and cost-effectiveness. While the overall strategy impacts directly on teaching, learning and student achievement, a series of other measures are designed to provide the necessary underpinning:

- Pre-school education has been introduced for all four-year-olds whose parents want it, and for around 60 per cent of three-year-olds.
- Class sizes for 5-, 6- and 7-year-olds are being reduced to a maximum of 30 across the system.
- Learning mentors (school-based counsellors) are being provided to help remove barriers to learning outside school from thousands of primary-age pupils in the disadvantaged parts of our large cities.
- After-school and/or summer learning opportunities are being offered in over 25 per cent of primary schools.
- Campaigns, including government-funded television advertisements, have been run to promote parental support for reading and mathematics.
- The National Year of Reading (in 1998–99) and Maths Year 2000 have opened up opportunities for businesses, community groups, libraries, churches and others to join the national crusade.
- Family literacy schemes are supporting parents whose own levels of literacy prevent them from assisting their children as much as they would like.
- Growing investment, year on year, is being made to provide extra assistance in literacy and maths for children whose first language is not English.
- The result of these measures is not only to strengthen the capacity of the system to deliver the demanding reward targets but also – to use the phrase of a school principal from El Paso – to take all the excuses off the table.

## **Section 4: The transformation of secondary education**

In our drive for world-class performance, the next phase demands that we modernise secondary education so that it builds on the growing success of the primary sector rather than, as at present, dissipating it.

Our data shows that currently, in the middle years (age 11–14):

- around 30 per cent of pupils have regressed in English and maths a year after leaving primary school
- the quality of teaching is poorer than for any other age group
- pupils make less progress than in other phases, especially in science
- the gap in performance between girls and boys, already evident at age 11, widens significantly
- the performance of black pupils, especially boys, slips dramatically

- secondary schools with concentrations of pupils whose prior experience of learning has been uninspiring, and whose present social circumstances are characterised by poverty, face an enormous challenge
- there is immense variation in performance among our secondary schools, even after controlling for intake

In these circumstances it is not surprising that many aspirant parents of all classes, especially in the large conurbations, are sceptical about publicly-provided secondary education. A key goal politically, socially and educationally is to convince this group that we can deliver a service which meets the needs and the aspirations of their children.

Our strategy for doing so has two elements:

- a universal strategy to improve the quality of teaching and learning, and therefore improve achievement, for all pupils aged 11–14
- a targeted programme called Excellence in Cities designed to promote both equity and diversity in England's major conurbations

### **Teaching and learning in the middle years (age 11–14)**

Our intention over the next three years is to design and implement a strategy for the middle years which will be of comparable thoroughness and quality to the national literacy and numeracy strategies at primary level, but which will take account of the greater complexity of secondary schools and the secondary curriculum. Its main characteristics will be:

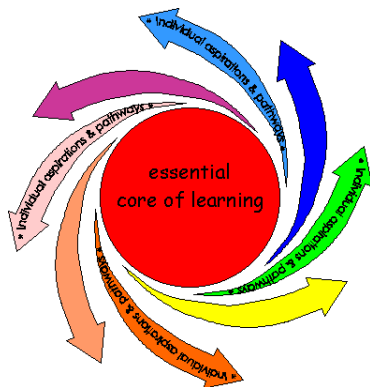
- new annual targets for schools and LEAs relating to the performance of 14-year-olds, and national targets for 2004
- new tests for age 12 and 13 (in addition to those already in place for 11- and 14-year-olds) to check that all pupils are making progress and that those who had not met national standards in literacy and numeracy by age 11 are catching up
- extension of the primary school strategies for literacy and numeracy into the middle years, including materials, a professional development programme and extra assistance for schools facing the greatest challenge
- improvement in transfer arrangements from primary to secondary schools, including funding summer school provision aimed at transferring pupils in almost half of secondary schools
- new teaching programmes for all curriculum subjects available electronically and in traditional form from this month
- the preparation and provision of professional development opportunities for all teachers in every subject
- the preparation and provision of professional development opportunities in transforming teaching and learning, available to all secondary teachers and including the teaching of thinking skills, assessment against standards, student engagement and individual student-level target-setting

Each aspect of this comprehensive programme will be trialled over the next two years starting in about 200 secondary schools this September (2000). From September 2001 it will be extended, and by September 2002 the full programme should be in place and making an impact on every one of our 4,000 secondary schools.

## Excellence in Cities (EiC)

Excellence in Cities (EiC) is a programme designed to transform both the reality and perception of secondary education in England's largest conurbations. Its purpose is to convince both parents and students that publicly-provided education can meet both their needs and their aspirations. If the programme is to succeed, it will need to guarantee high standards for all in the essential core of learning and, simultaneously, open up individual pathways and aspirations for each student. In short, it will need to provide both equity and diversity.

From the point of view of the individual student the diagram below prepared by Vicki Phillips, the inspirational Superintendent of Lancaster (PA.), depicts precisely what we aim to achieve for each individual student.



We have developed four core beliefs which inform every decision from national level to individual classroom. The statement we sent to participating schools reads as follows:

### High expectations of every individual

EiC will encourage all schools to have high expectations of every individual pupil, and all young people to have high expectations of themselves. It will seek to meet the needs and aspirations of all young people, whatever their gifts and talents, and to remove systematically the barriers to their learning, whether inside or outside the school. No pupil's education should be confined or restricted because of the school they happen to attend.

## Diversity

EiC is designed to increase the diversity of provision in secondary education in the major conurbations. Diversity will differ dramatically from the past in two important respects:

- Firstly – as with the Government’s wider approach – it is not for a few at the expense of the many. Through the establishment of more specialist schools, more Beacon schools, more EAZs and through City Learning Centres, many secondary schools will take on specialist functions in addition to their core function of providing a good rounded education for all their pupils.
- Secondly, the additional resources a school receives under the programme are designed to bring higher performance, not just to that school, but to other schools in the area too.

## Networks

EiC is based firmly on the belief that schools working together, collaboratively, can achieve more for pupils, parents and communities than schools working in isolation. Of course, each individual school is responsible for continuously improving its own performance. But by working with others to share best practice, tackle common problems and offer specialist opportunities to pupils from a range of schools, each school can help to enhance performance across an area. Promoting diversity, recognising excellence and disseminating good practice are essential to these networks working effectively.

Each pupil should see him or herself as a member, not just of a specific school community, but of a wider learning community committed to his or her success.

## Extending opportunity

Some schools in large conurbations have always succeeded. Yet others, often close by, have suffered. The EiC programme is intended to bring success to every school rather than to concentrate it in a few locations. The investment that the EiC programme brings to an area should therefore extend opportunity. Rather than reinforcing current inequalities it should enhance quality. Its purpose is to make Excellence for Everyone a reality rather than just a slogan.

To turn these beliefs into reality there are seven strands of the policy:

- **The gifted and talented**  
Each participating school provides a teaching programme for the most gifted and talented 10 per cent of students at the school.  
Each school is part of a national training programme designed to enable them to do so.
- **Removing barriers to learning**  
Each school is able to provide a learning mentor – a trained, dedicated adult – whose job is to remove, for those pupils who require it, problems outside school which prevent learning inside.



- **Behaviour support**  
There will be the new provision within schools of learning support units which strengthen a school's capacity to deal with disruptive students,
- **Beacon schools**  
Schools of proven success will each be given funding and responsibility to provide professional development to other schools in the Excellence in Cities area; these schools are part of the IBM Wired for Learning initiative.
- **Specialist schools**  
These are schools which receive additional funding in order to provide a specialist focus in either technology, modern foreign languages, sports or arts, and a responsibility to share that resource and expertise with others.
- **New City Learning Centres**  
These are centres, based at schools, that are designed to take advantage of the latest developments in technology and provide learning to students of all ages across a community during evenings, weekends and holidays as well as during school time.
- **Education Action Zones**  
Small networks of schools, in pockets of severe deprivation within large cities, focused on integrating primary and secondary education more effectively and also on co-ordinating education, health and social services in those areas.

The programme has only been operational for 10 months, but already there have been substantial reductions in truancy and exclusion, and improvements in pupil attitude. The programme is hugely popular with teachers and principals (which is not true of all our policies). It has broken down the isolation of many inner-city schools and encouraged a new sense of shared endeavour. We believe these are 'vital signs' of improvement. Ultimately the programme should result in a complete re-engineering of secondary education. Instead of fitting students into the system as we did in the 20th century, we would build the system around the needs and aspirations of students.

## **Section 5: The modernisation of the teaching profession**

No matter how coherent our framework for school improvement, no matter how successful our policies to strengthen primary and secondary education, world-class standards will elude us unless we can recruit, retain and develop teachers and school leaders of real quality. As in many parts of the United States, we face major challenges in doing so:

- There are major teacher shortages in some secondary subjects including science, maths, modern foreign languages and music.
- Schools in challenging circumstances face particular recruitment and retention difficulties.
- There is a shortage of good candidates for leadership positions, especially at primary levels.
- All of the above are particularly acute in London and the South East where the cost of living is much higher.

Beyond the challenges of recruitment and retention there are other serious problems. While at the cutting edge of change there are growing numbers of teachers and school leaders who are embracing reform, the general culture in the profession is characterised by anxiety about change, sensitivity to criticism, and a sense of being overburdened. In addition there is a pervasive belief, to some extent justified, that society does not value teachers sufficiently. The government's reform programme with its powerful critique of the status quo is, simultaneously, the short-term cause of some of this and the long-term solution. Either way, it is evident that as the economy continues to boom the education service will find itself competing ever more fiercely with the rapidly growing demands of the new economy for talented graduates. It is against this background that the government is implementing the most radical reform of the teaching profession since WW II.

In order to address these problems –some immediate, others still emerging – before they became acute, the government published proposals for a comprehensive reform of the teaching profession in December 1998. The programme outlined at that time, modified slightly in the light of consultation, is currently being implemented.

The new vision of a modernised teaching profession has five aspects:

## **1. Strengthening leadership**

The framework for school improvement, with its emphasis on schools themselves taking responsibility for their own destiny, puts a high premium on leadership. It may be a simplification to say that the difference between success and failure is the quality of the principal, but it is not far from the truth. In the turnaround of failing schools, for example, a change of principal has been necessary in around 75 per cent of cases. The systemic problem is clear. The people currently in, or on the brink of, leadership positions have been promoted with the expectation of administering the traditional education system, only to reach the top and find it in a process of radical transformation. Their careers have prepared them to manage a system which no longer exists. Instead of managing stability, they have to lead change. In place of an emphasis on smooth administration, they find an unrelenting focus on pupil outcomes.

Our tasks as a government are to attract and develop a new generation of school leaders and to enable the present generation to adapt to this radically new and demanding world.

To do so we have:

- created a new qualification for aspiring principals (the National Professional Qualification for Headship), which sets new standards and combines workplace learning with scholarship
- provided all newly appointed headteachers with a £2,000 voucher to spend on professional development, invited them every year to a spectacular conference in London, and linked them to an online learning community in which they can debate among themselves and with internationally-known education experts
- established a new qualification for mid-career principals (the Leadership Programme for Serving Heads) which requires them to engage in vigorous, externally validated self-assessment
- announced the intention to establish a new National College for School Leadership which will

- become operational later this year
- have a new state-of-the-art building on a university campus
- develop an online as well as traditional presence
- link our school principals to leaders in other sectors and their peers in other countries
- worked with business to provide business mentors for thousands of school principals
- improved principals' pay and capacity to earn performance bonuses
- created a new leadership tier in each school
- established a £50 million fund to enable the removal or a retirement of principals who are not ready for the new challenge

## **2. Linking pay and performance for teachers**

The central challenge for us, as for many other education systems, is to recruit good people into teaching, enable those who are demonstrably successful to rise rapidly, and improve the status of teachers in their own eyes and those of the public. Linking teachers' pay to their performance is the key to achieving these objectives. In addition to raising the pay of all teachers by more than inflation (a 3.5 per cent pay increase this year with inflation around 2 per cent), we will introduce in the next 12 months:

- a new performance threshold for teachers seven years into their careers, or earlier if they are exceptional:
  - their performance will be assessed by their principal and an external assessor against published standards (see below), which include the impact of their work on pupil performance
  - all those who meet the standard will receive a £2,000 pay rise (about 8 per cent extra for the average teacher) which will be consolidated permanently into their pay
  - all 24,000 teachers who have been teaching for seven years or longer are eligible to apply by June this year
- a performance management system, under which principals must assess every teacher's contribution annually in improving the performance of both pupils and the school
- two routes to higher pay above the threshold, one for taking on management and administration, the other for being an outstanding teacher. The historic complaint of teachers – “the only way to get promoted is to stop teaching” – has thus been answered

- a School Achievement Award scheme, which will provide lump-sum bonuses to be distributed among the staff of those schools which demonstrate substantial improvement or sustained excellence. About 30 per cent of schools will benefit

### **The threshold standards**

Teachers should:

- have a thorough and up-to-date knowledge of the teaching of their subject(s) and take account of wider curriculum developments which are relevant to their work
- consistently and effectively plan lessons and sequences of lessons to meet pupils' individual learning needs
- consistently and effectively use a range of appropriate strategies for teaching and classroom management
- consistently and effectively use information about prior attainment to set well-grounded expectations for pupils, and monitor progress to give clear and constructive feedback
- show that, as a result of their teaching, their pupils achieve well relative to the pupils' prior attainment, making progress as good as, or better than, similar pupils nationally
- take responsibility for their professional development and use the outcomes to improve their teaching and pupils' learning
- make an active contribution to the policies and aspirations of the school

These proposals have been highly controversial within the teaching profession but broadly supported outside it. The unions representing principals have now accepted them and decided to make them work. Those representing classroom teachers are divided. The flashpoint has been the government's insistence that pupil outcomes must be taken into account in assessing a teacher's performance. We have done so partly because, to anyone outside the teaching profession, it is simply not credible to leave the central purpose of an activity out of the assessment of it, and partly because our wider objective is to create a culture in the education service in which everyone, whatever their role, takes responsibility for pupil performance.

### **3. Improving professional development**

For most teachers professional development has traditionally been haphazard, off-site, barely relevant, poorly provided, and a chore at best. I exaggerate, but not much. If we are to create an education service capable both of achieving world-class standards and of changing rapidly, we know we have to do much better. We are significantly increasing investment in professional development year on year, but the issue is at least as much one of the nature and quality of provision. Across the country as a whole, expenditure on professional development is likely to exceed five per cent of the total teachers' salary bill for the first time next year. To improve quality as well as quantity, we have:

- developed the capacity to organise and deliver professional development of quality to all teachers on themes of high national priority, such as literacy and numeracy in primary schools (I have already described this model above)

- begun to put in place arrangements to ensure that each school, in addition to its mainstream devolved budget, has a clearly identified, separate pot of money for professional development designed to support its own improvement strategy
- developed programmes, most of which are currently in their pilot phase, to encourage individual teachers to see their own professional development as both a right and a responsibility. Among them are state-funded individual learning accounts for teachers in disadvantaged areas, research scholarships, and international exchange opportunities
- sought to enhance the capacity of teachers to provide professional development for their peers through the creation of Beacon schools, advanced skills teacher posts and, for national priorities, the creation of networks of exemplary professionals such as our 2,000 leading maths teachers, each given several days a year to share good teaching practice with colleagues in other schools
- established a General Teaching Council to promote higher professional standards and improve the status of the profession. Its founding chairman is the internationally known film producer David Puttnam (Chariots of Fire, The Killing Fields)

#### **4. Strengthening the preparation of teachers**

While our professional development reforms are improving the skills of the existing teaching force, we are also seeking to improve the training and preparation of new entrants. Our reforms to date have:

- imposed a new national curriculum for initial teacher training, setting out the standards and content of training courses which all providers must follow
- introduced training salaries of £6,000 (£13,000 for teachers of shortage subjects) for good graduates doing postgraduate training or for mature entrants joining teaching through the employment-based routes
- required, for all newly qualified teachers, an induction year with a lighter timetable and clear standards for achievement by the end of the year
- run television and cinema advertising promoting teaching as a career
- developed plans for a fast-track route into teaching for exceptional candidates of any age, with extra intensive training, extra pay and extra responsibility

These measures are designed to lead into the wider reforms allowing talented teachers to progress more rapidly than ever. It is too early to say what their impact will be, but applications for initial teacher training are up significantly since the new training salaries were announced.

## 5. Providing greater support

Teaching is demanding work at any time. During a period of rapid change and high public profile it is exceptionally demanding. If teachers are to be successful in the future, we will need to enable them to prioritise teaching, learning and their own professional development, and simultaneously to relieve them of the other demands on their time. So far we have not achieved the balance we would want, but a number of measures are beginning to make a difference:

- a major investment in school buildings (11,000 improved since May 1997), staff facilities and information and communications technology
- the provision of standards, teaching materials, planning guidance, data and best practice advice through the internet (the Standards site had 17,000 pages searched on Christmas Day)
- making provision for, and encouraging, the use of technical expertise to maintain ICT systems, manage school budgets etc
- training and developing over 20,000 additional classroom aides, particularly to support literacy and numeracy teaching in primary schools
- reducing bureaucratic burdens on schools and teachers by streamlining administrative systems

## Section 6: The problems

I work for the government. It's my job to promote policies, show their coherence and expect them to work. By any standards the programme is an ambitious one, and I believe it will work and will achieve our objective of creating a world-class system. No one, however, is likely to believe my account or share my optimism unless I draw attention to the problems and 'messiness' which accompany this reform, just as they accompany any major programme of change. Indeed, just over three years on, it would be no exaggeration to say that it is at a critical stage. A great many elements are currently in intensive implementation – literacy, numeracy, the pay threshold, performance management and training for ICT, for example. The capacity of the system (not to mention that of many individual principals and teachers) is stretched to the limit. Only if each element of the reform is well planned and implemented can we achieve successful and irreversible reform.

In the meantime, the challenges remain substantial:

- Too few teachers see the big picture of reform as I've described it in this paper, and the experience of the last decade leaves them sceptical about whether any government ever sees a reform through.
- In order to promote radical change the government has to spell out a compelling critique of the present, but in doing so, too often portrays schools and teachers negatively.
- The sustained drive from national government risks the creation of an entirely top-down reform with its associated pressures to conform, whereas all evidence suggests that successful reform requires a combination of top-down and bottom-up change.

- The growing assertiveness of central government on the one hand, and of principals of successful schools on the other, has placed local education authorities, the middle tier, in an uncomfortable position: criticised from the school end for being interfering bureaucrats, and from the centre for not being sufficiently effective in implementing reform. Moreover, the evidence suggests that too few LEAs perform their functions well.
- The system for funding schools, while a great deal more progressive than that in most American states, is nevertheless complex, lacking in transparency, and a cause of tension. Too often it provides an excuse for schools or LEAs not to take responsibility for reform and, from a central government point of view, does not always deliver the substantial extra resources to the front line where they make most difference.
- Even highly competent governments make mistakes occasionally, which, even in a context of broadly successful progress, create noise and frustration in the system.

Our success in bringing about irreversible reform will depend on our ability to address these problems and minimise their negative consequences, while sustaining the implementation of the overall strategy until all students achieve high standards, no matter what.

## **Section 7: Conclusion**

The present phase of reform is all-embracing and urgent but, even as it is implemented, it is important to look ahead and to anticipate the shape of reform to come. I want to finish this paper with some speculations about the future.

### **1. The first task is to see things through**

It may seem a statement of the obvious, but the first task in the next three to five years is to embed the reforms currently being put in place and ensure that they become irreversible. The literacy and numeracy strategies at primary level need to be constantly refined and built upon for at least another four years, so that every primary teacher's skills reach high levels. The performance management system needs to ensure that every teacher is focused on the quality of his or her teaching so that all students achieve high standards. The system needs to develop the capacity to prevent failure as well as to tackle it after it has occurred.

All this is not about new reforms but ensuring that the present ones work. The last 20 years of education reform are littered with programmes which have been inadequately implemented or abandoned by governments without the courage or strategic sense to see them through to impact on student performance. We will not make that mistake.

### **2. If it all works, the result will be schools with high autonomy and high performance**

The policy principle of intervention in inverse proportion to success is being applied steadily. If our overall strategy works, as more schools succeed they will have greater autonomy and reward. Ultimately each school would have very substantial autonomy. Each would have responsibility for meeting standards in the core areas of learning but also for making a distinctive contribution to the system as a whole. The autonomy would not be unconditional. It would have been earned, because performance had been demonstrated. Government's role in these

circumstances would shift from driving reform to creating the conditions and – crucially – the culture for a transformation which would be led and created by the schools themselves. This is precisely the shift that has happened in successful businesses, with the centre shaping overall direction and culture while front-line units lead innovation and respond to ever higher customer demands.

### **3. School reform will globalise**

Just as financial services globalised in the 1980s and media and communications in the 1990s, so in this decade we will see education reform globalising. The impact of the international comparisons of the 1990s, such as TIMSS, was profound. Increasingly, researchers and policy-makers have extended their horizons beyond national boundaries in the search for solutions. This process will go much further as technological change and globalisation gather pace. The death of distance, best characterised by e-business, will not leave education untouched. We will see the globalisation of large elements of the curriculum. We in England will want to be sure that our 14-year-olds are as well as educated as students in the USA, Germany or Singapore, not least because ultimately they will be competing in a global job market. In any case, physics is the same in Kentucky as it is in Kent. Media and communications organisations will prepare and market internationally excellent interactive materials which will influence curriculum, standards, pedagogy and assessment across international boundaries. They will also re-engineer where and how learning takes place. It is hard to predict how this will happen; successful school systems will be those that are open-minded and sensitive enough to spot it when it does.

The school will remain crucial providing the foundation of learning, the induction into democratic society, and the constant support that every individual student needs. However, it will cease to be the provider of all learning for each student. Instead, while it will provide some, it will also seek learning opportunities in other schools, in out-of-school learning settings (such as museums), in the community, in the workplace or over the internet. It will be an advocate for the student and a guarantor of quality. Increasingly, teachers and principals will think not just outside the boundaries of their school building but beyond their city and their country too. To anticipate this, in England we intend to provide international exchange opportunities for 5,000 teachers a year, and from next year – through the new Leadership College – offer every principal the opportunity to link to their peers abroad.

### **4. The central question for public authorities will cease to be “Who provides?” Instead they will ask “How is the public interest to be secured?”**

We must ask ourselves from where the energy, knowledge, imagination, skill and investment will come to meet the immense challenge of education reform over the next decade.

For most of the 20th century, the drive for educational progress came from the public sector, often in combination with the religious or voluntary sectors. Towards the end of 20th century, as frustration with existing systems grew, this legacy was challenged by a growing vibrant private sector, especially in the USA but also in many other parts of the world, including China, Africa and South America. The challenge for the 21st century is surely to seek out what works. The issue is not whether the public, private or voluntary sector alone will shape the future, but what partnerships and combinations of the three will make the most difference to student performance.

There is a rich field for research and development here, and we need to know more. In England we are consciously experimenting by creating new vehicles for partnership with the private sector. So far, we have:



- 250 Beacon schools, some linked to IBM's Wired for Learning
- 70 Education Action Zones bringing private and public sectors together to raise standards in areas of disadvantage
- the Private Finance Initiative bringing private capital into school building
- 500 specialist schools, all with business partners
- proposals for new city academies, developed in partnership with business, in large cities

We are also intentionally breaking the mould in our relationships with the voluntary and religious sectors by, for example, providing for the first time state funding for Muslim, Sikh and Seventh Day Adventist schools in addition to the Catholic, Anglican and Jewish schools which have received state funding for over a century.

The central challenge is to build social coalitions in the drive for higher standards and radical reform. It is clear, in Hong Kong and elsewhere, that the business and religious sectors are strong allies. This is true in the USA too where, in cities like Philadelphia, the churches provide real energy and drive for educational progress. It is clear in Eastern Europe, where the Soros Foundation is investing heavily in early-years education. Each a different combination, each fit for purpose, and each shifting the public policy question from "Who provides education?" to "How can the public interest in education be secured?"

Public authorities will need to invest more in education than ever before, partly because of technology and pressures to improve teachers' pay, conditions and professional development, but mainly because they will be striving to achieve much higher performance standards for ALL, not just some, students. Meanwhile, those parents who are able to will spend more money than ever on their children's education. Some may choose private schools, depending on the quality of public provision locally, but many will spend on resources for the home and on out-of-school learning opportunities of all kinds.

The challenge for government will therefore be not only to provide high quality schools but also to provide the equivalent of the home and out-of-school learning opportunities for those students whose parents do not have the will or the means to provide them. This will be crucial from an equity as well as a performance point of view, and opens up an entirely new area for public policy.