



House of Commons  
Education and Skills Committee

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**Government's Responses to  
the Committee's Second  
Report (Education Outside  
the Classroom) Sixth Report  
(National Skills Strategy: 14-  
19 Education) and Eighth  
Report (Teaching Children to  
Read) of Session 2004–2005**

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**First Special Report of Session  
2005–06**

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## The Education and Skills Committee

The Education and Skills Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Department for Education and Skills and its associated public bodies.

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### Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are David Lloyd (Clerk), Dr Sue Griffiths, (Second Clerk), Libby Aston (Committee Specialist), Nerys Roberts (Committee Specialist), Lisa Wrobel (Committee Assistant), Sue Monaghan (Committee Assistant) and John Kittle (Senior Officer Clerk).

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# First Special Report

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1. The Committee published its Second Report of Session 2004–05 (*Education outside the Classroom*)<sup>1</sup> on 10 February 2005. The Government response was received on 6 July 2005, and is published as Appendix 1 to this Report.
2. The Committee published its Eighth report of Session 2004–05 (*Teaching Children to Read*)<sup>2</sup> on 7 April 2005. The Government response was received on 8 July 2005 and is published as Appendix 2 to this Report.
3. The Committee published its Sixth Report of Session 2004–05 (*National Skills Strategy: 14–19 Education*)<sup>3</sup> on 24 March 2005. The Government response was received on 12 July and is published as Appendix 3 to this Report.

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1 Second Report from the Education and Skills Committee, Session 2004–05, *Education outside the Classroom*, HC 120.

2 Eighth Report from the Education and Skills Committee, Session 2004–05, *Teaching Children to Read*, HC 121.

3 Sixth Report from the Education and Skills Committee, Session 2004–05, *National Skills Strategy: 14–19 Education*, HC 37–I and 37–II.

# Appendix 1

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Government's response to the Second Report from the Education and Skills Committee, Session 2004–05.

The Committee's conclusions and recommendations are in bold text. The Government's response is in plain text.

## Introduction

The Government welcomes the Education & Skills Select Committee report which highlights the important issue of education outside the classroom. A number of recommendations point to a strategic response by the Government and partners (Recommendations 1, 18, 21, 24, 25, 26, 27). The Government recognises the value of education outside the classroom for all ages and abilities, on site and beyond, during the formal school day and beyond. We are promoting these benefits widely to encourage out of classroom learning to be seen as an integral part of all children and young people's education.

We do not accept the Committee's conclusion that education outside the classroom is in decline. We have seen no factual supporting evidence—either in the submissions provided by different organisations to the Committee, or elsewhere. The evidence collected by the Department, direct from schools, as well as that gleaned from discussions with groups of schools and LEAs gives a picture of stable or increasing activity, and positive support and understanding of the benefits which pupils derive from these experiences. However, we are also clear that there are a number of ways in which education outside the classroom could be strengthened and we are keen to engage external organisations and school communities, including Heads, teachers, parents and pupils, in moving forward.

As we said to the Committee in both our oral and written evidence, the Government is keen to develop, with partners, a Manifesto for Education outside the Classroom. For it to be successful and to draw together the expertise, energy and commitment of all interested parties, it must be a product of consultation and consensus.

We are working with a range of bodies to get the Manifesto underway. On 11 February the Department for Education & Skills (DfES) brought together around 30 partners from across the outdoor learning, cultural, heritage, built environment and museum sectors at an initial scoping workshop for a Manifesto.

On 15 February, the Secretary of State for Education and Skills announced a Manifesto for Education outside the Classroom, to be launched in the new school year. In her announcement she said that, bringing together a range of stakeholders, the Manifesto will: set out a joint commitment that all children should have the opportunity of a wide range of high quality outdoor learning, including at least one residential experience; encourage schools to partner with other schools and outdoor learning providers; encourage parents to take an active interest in outdoor learning; set out a range of advice and support; provide information and good practice guidance on health and safety issues; and set out priorities for the development of outdoor learning. The Secretary of State also announced new

forthcoming guidance to remind employers how they must treat staff fairly in investigating any rare but unfortunate case of pupil injury: the law protects from liability all school staff who take reasonable care.

In the Manifesto, we want to vigorously promote DfES's standard forms, and remind schools in plain terms how to keep risk assessment proportionate. We will underline that schools should not over-complicate—they should ignore the trivial, and make risk assessments sufficient, not perfect. We want to work closely with our partners, to reduce duplication and conflicting paperwork by increasing use of common standards right across the education visits sector.

We share the Committee's concern for pupils in deprived areas having the same chances as those from well off families and this is something we shall pursue in our Manifesto discussions. We will also include the future role of Educational Visits Co-ordinators and the Committee's suggestion of a 'champion'. We will link with key DfES programmes, including Extended Schools and activities for teenagers.

We think it is important also to acknowledge the value which schools themselves place on the help they already get from the Government and from many other organisations. We trust the professionalism of teachers, and that of the many people working in different settings, and will continue to work with them to change attitudes and expectations over time. The support, advice, and resources we and other organisations offer schools are greatly appreciated and help teachers to make these experiences a reality for their pupils.

We set out below our response to the Committee's recommendations.

## The value of education outside the classroom

### *Recommendation 2*

**Like all educational processes, the benefits of education outside the classroom should be rigorously researched, documented and communicated. Positive and reliable evidence of the benefits of outdoor activities would help schools determine the priority to afford to such work. (Paragraph 13)**

We agree with the Committee. We have co-sponsored two recent studies and have recently published the results of our current research. We will promote the findings to schools.

## The potential of education outside the classroom

### *Recommendation 3*

**It is clear to the Committee that outdoor education is a sector suffering from considerable unexploited potential. (Paragraph 18)**

We agree with the Committee that there is a wealth of good practice and many committed teachers, Heads and providers who value the benefits of learning outside the classroom and who make sure pupils experience a range of safe and stimulating activities. We believe these experiences should be widely acknowledged as an essential part of children's education at all stages.

We also agree that evidence from different sources, sometimes contradictory, provides a patchy picture. Evidence direct from schools appears generally more positive than that from other sources.

In July 2004 MORI research on study support (out of school hours activity) found that 67% of secondary schools provided field trips; the 2003–4 survey of school sport partnerships showed that 68% of the 6500 schools taking part in the survey offered outdoor and adventurous activities (which are part of the PE curriculum).

In Autumn 2004, we commissioned the Duke of Edinburgh's Awards (DoE) and The Scouts Association (SA) to do a survey of school visits for 7 to 16 year olds in 900 secondary & primary schools. The draft report shows 86% of primary and 99% of secondary schools offer pupils at least one residential opportunity during their time in the school. We will publish the full report soon.

We are planning a further sample survey of LEAs and schools, with in-depth study of visit records and school patterns of activity.

## **Managing risks and streamlining paperwork**

### ***Recommendations 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9***

**Many of the organisations and individuals who submitted evidence to our inquiry cited the fear of accidents and the possibility of litigation as one of the main reasons for the apparent decline in school trips. It is the view of this Committee that this fear is entirely out of proportion to the real risks. (Paragraph 19)**

The Government welcomes this conclusion. We agree that seven million pupils from schools in England go on school activities off-site or outdoors throughout the year, on which mishaps are rare, and serious ones even more so. We believe that this excellent record is due to good risk management by LEAs, schools and their staff, supported by good behaviour by pupils and cooperation by parents. (See also our response to recommendation 23.)

**We welcome the DfES health and safety guidance which clearly sets out what is expected of all those involved in organising school trips. There remain some concerns relating to guidance on trips involving children with special educational needs, where there could be more specific recommendations on levels of staffing and the right of children to attend. This area is likely to be affected by the enactment of the Disability Discrimination Bill and we recommend that the DfES review its guidance in this context. (Paragraph 22)**

The Government is pleased that the Committee welcomes current guidance. We had already noted internally that, when we next update our guidance, it would be useful to say a little more on Special Educational Needs. We aim to publish updates (on the web) in 2005–06, with links to our recent SEN travel checklists, and to the outcomes of two projects now underway with external partners. These two projects will develop tools to help schools and LEAs review and revise their Accessibility Plans and Strategies and a DVD to help explain to schools how they might make Reasonable Adjustments to their policies and practice to

include disabled pupils in all aspects of school life. It is intended that the DVD resource will include a section on school trips. (See also Recommendation 22 about guidance.)

**We do not believe that the NASUWT wishes to see the end of all school trips. We therefore recommend that the union seriously reviews its advice to members not to participate in school trips, which is not a helpful attitude. (Paragraph 26)**

NASUWT, as they told the Committee in their oral evidence, are already preparing to review their advice as a result of good progress made in talks with DFES. We are glad that DfES's announcement on 15 February of forthcoming new guidance to school employers on treating staff fairly was greeted by NASUWT as a further step forward, which should help their review towards a positive conclusion.

**We recommend that the DfES makes it clear to schools and LEAs that it is unacceptable to settle frivolous and unfounded claims out of court simply to get rid of the problem. By working with teacher unions, including the NASUWT, the DfES should be able to address their concerns and persuade the unions to move forward from what is in our view, a needlessly obstructive attitude. (Paragraph 29)**

We agree with this point. We will emphasise it in our forthcoming guidance, and will make links with current work by the Department for Constitutional Affairs on improving the compensation system and public confidence in it, as highlighted in Lord Falconer's 22 March announcement that we will use the law to regulate the activities of claims managers. Andrew Adonis now represents the Department for Education and Skills on the working group looking at compensation, chaired by Baroness Ashton.

**We recommend that the DfES takes action to streamline the risk assessment system surrounding school trips, promoting its standard forms more vigorously and deprecating bad practice. We further recommend that AALA licensed centres be subject to a much streamlined risk assessment process, and that the DfES considers expanding the AALA licensing scheme to include other sectors, such as foreign and voluntary operators. (Paragraph 35)**

We will be happy to promote our model forms further in the context of the new guidance on treating staff fairly, and of the forthcoming education outside the classroom manifesto. We already point LEAs and schools to HSE guidance which makes clear to employers that they should not over-complicate risk management, but should "ignore the trivial" and make assessments "suitable and sufficient—not perfect". (See also our reply to recommendation 22.)

We wrote to all local education authorities in England in May 2004, reminding them that they need not seek duplicate assurances of safety for adventure activities already safety-inspected by the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority (AALA).

As to expanding the AALA, DfES considered such matters relatively recently in its latest review of the Authority; as a result, Ministers decided last year, in line with broad support from consultees, not to widen the remit of the AALA at this time. We believe it is too soon to revisit such issues at present or in the near future, especially in the light of the Government's recent acceptance of the Hampton Report recommendation that an expanded HSE should take in the functions of the AALA, among other regulators. We are

pleased that the AALA are doing a good job in assuring, by inspection, the safety of higher-hazard paid-for adventure activities for under-18s.

**We recommend that the DfES thoroughly investigate the extent to which difficulties securing insurance cover are a barrier to education outside the classroom and develops options to resolve any problems. (Paragraph 38)**

We agree with the Association of British Insurers, who are confident that insurance cover for schools is not a significant barrier to activity by schools. To make quite sure, we are including public liability insurance in our current pilot to help LEAs manage insurance better, even though it is much less significant than their largest insurance cost, which is premises (e.g. fire). We are also keeping in touch with work by the Home Office on risk management and insurance matters for the voluntary and community sector, which includes some providers of activities to schools.

## Teacher training

### *Recommendations 10, 11 and 12*

**We recommend that the DfES work with the Teacher Training Agency to ensure that Initial Teacher Training courses demonstrate the potential benefits of education outside the classroom and point teachers towards ways to develop their skills in this area as their career progresses. (Paragraph 43)**

Initial teacher training programmes have a great deal of ground to cover and delivery is subject to tough time constraints. Nonetheless, “Qualifying to Teach”, which sets out the professional standards for qualified teacher status and requirements for initial teacher training (ITT), requires those awarded QTS to demonstrate that they are able to plan opportunities for pupils to learn in out-of-school contexts, such as school visits, museums, theatres, field-work and employment-based settings, with the help of other staff where appropriate.

For the future, the Teacher Training Agency is likely to be setting in train a review of the standards in “Qualifying to Teach” with a view to implementation in the school year starting in September 2007. This would be subject to public consultation and reporting and provide an opportunity for interested parties to propose changes to the standards—for example, that more emphasis should be placed on education outside the classroom within initial teacher training.

**Any attempt to raise the quantity and quality of outdoor education depends crucially on the skills and motivation of the teachers involved. We therefore recommend that the DfES give an explicit commitment to support Continuing Professional Development in this area. Any Departmental Manifesto for Outdoor Learning that may emerge should include an entitlement to training for teachers. Networks such as Teachers TV can also be of significant benefit in spreading good practice and should be engaged in this project. (Paragraph 44)**

The DfES *Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners* recognises that continuing professional development (CPD) is central to improvements in teaching and learning. The Government’s ambition is that all teachers should benefit from and contribute to

professional development throughout their careers, and that professional development should be planned, appropriate to the individual concerned, be informed by performance management, and be linked to plans for school improvement. Decisions about professional development activity will continue to be taken by schools and teachers.

The Teacher Training Agency (TTA) has been given a new remit for teachers' continuing professional development (CPD). They will be working with a wide range of partners, including teachers' professional bodies and subject associations, to bring greater coherence to professional and occupational standards and to CPD; to provide leadership and guidance to schools and local authorities; to monitor the quality and coverage of provision; to help to shape future strategy priorities; and to co-ordinate specific programmes. Their remit starts to become operational from April this year.

We strongly support the Committee's view that the drive to raise standards in this area, as in others, depends on the skills and commitment of the school team. We agree that it will be valuable for schools, as part of their strategic planning for training and development, to think about what preparation and support their staff need in order to develop their capacity for education outside the classroom.

We agree Teachers' TV is a good method of disseminating good practice to schools. It is run independently of the Government, but there are opportunities to propose programming ideas to the channel. In fact there are 8 episodes in 'Worth the Trip', with one featuring the Growing Schools programme. Others include a maths trip to an arboretum, a geography trip down a cavern and a visit to an exhibition about ancient Egypt. Early Years programmes include 'the Outdoor Environment', and how to use it as an integrated part of the classroom. In Primary programmes, there are two on field trips and classroom follow up—'Invaders and Settlers', with Year 4 extending their knowledge of place and environment by studying their own locality. Two Geography experts comment on the organisation and content of the field trip.

**We recommend that the DfES engage teachers' professional bodies and subject associations in the provision of fieldwork training for science and geography teachers, ensuring that appropriate programmes of professional development are on offer to all those teachers who might benefit. (Paragraph 47)**

We acknowledge the importance of engaging teachers' professional bodies and subject associations.

We have funded the Association for Science Education (ASE) to develop training courses that will increase teacher skills and confidence in providing outdoor learning opportunities. These are currently being delivered through Science Learning Centres, a national network for professional development in the teaching of science, set up by the DfES in partnership with The Wellcome Trust. Since the Centres started delivering courses in October 2004 many of them have delivered or are in the process of delivering, field work related courses.

We have also funded the Geographical Association (GA) to develop a Professional Development Unit on fieldwork which is now available on the Open University Teach and Learn website. This series includes units on supporting fieldwork in Primary and Secondary Geography as well as in History and Science.

Last year DfES supported, via the subject associations, the development of geography resources and networks for primary and secondary schools—all emphasise outdoor learning as a defining characteristic of high quality geography.

The Geography Focus Group, which we outlined in our written evidence, has an outdoor learning working group.

The subject associations also provide, independently, substantial support, including the Royal Geographical Society's three fieldwork safety training courses—attended in the last 4 years by over 750 teachers and outdoor leaders. This summer the GA in association with the Field Studies Council will be publishing a number of resources to support teachers with fieldwork, enhancing an already rich list of published leaflets, posters and handbooks, for all phases of education from early years to post-16.

## Schools

### *Recommendation 13 and 14*

**Our evidence suggests that EVCs are working well in schools, but we would re-iterate our comments on training. In order to be effective, educational visits co-ordinators must have access to high quality programmes of Continuing Professional Development. We also consider that the EVC role should be developed further into that of a champion for outdoor learning within a school. This should include not only the promotion of off-site visits but also the benefits of using the school grounds as a resource. (Paragraph 49)**

Responsibility and funding for Continual Professional Development is delegated to schools. The establishment of EVCs, which the Committee welcomed and which DfES helped to fund, was in large part aided by the Outdoor Education Advisers Panel (OEAP), who are currently:

- a) continuing and sustaining the original EVC initiative by work to:
  - deliver training, with LEA trainers, to new staff to be the EVC for the school they work in, where new staff have replaced colleagues leaving to other jobs or are otherwise new to the role;
  - update the skills of existing EVCs, as many were trained some time ago.
- b) initiating a new scheme to train visit leaders. This is for teachers, youth workers and support staff who lead and support visits. It focuses on active risk management in the outdoors and in particular, near key hazards (e.g. water), for staff of the school/ group. It comprises national and regional Trainer-Training, to help each LEA to have 1–3 trainers for its schools and groups; and LEA training for schools and Youth Groups, with an eventual target of covering all establishments.

We are interested in the Committee's suggestion for a wider EVC role, and will pursue this in our discussions with partners on the Education outside the Classroom Manifesto.

**It appears that some new schools are being built without due regard to the educational potential of school grounds. This is a result of the lack of leadership and strategic**

**planning from the DfES with regard to outdoor learning. We urge the Department to take action to ensure that new capital projects incorporate good design of outdoor spaces into their plans. (Paragraph 53)**

Schools, LAs and their partners are encouraged to look as widely as possible at all educational needs, both inside and outside the classroom, as part of their overall construction strategy.

To support the delivery of high class outdoor learning facilities, we provide design guidance in the form of Building Bulletins, which apply to all maintained school sectors, including academy and non academy secondary schools, primary schools and special needs schools:

- Building Bulletin 71: ‘The Outdoor Classroom’ (2nd edition 1999) and 85: ‘School Grounds’ (1997), highlight the potential of school grounds as a valuable resource to support and enrich the whole curriculum and the education of all pupils;
- Building Bulletin 95: ‘Schools for the Future’ (2003), gives guidance on developing external areas in “schools for the 21st century”; and
- Non-statutory area guidelines for outdoor areas have recently been updated and are available in Building Bulletin 98: ‘Briefing Framework for Secondary School Projects’ and Building Bulletin 99: ‘Briefing Framework for Primary School Projects’. For the first time, these now include specific recommendations for ‘habitat areas’ developed for a wide range of activities (such as meadowland, wildlife habitats and gardens to support the curriculum and improve play and recreational spaces), as well as outdoor PE facilities and informal and social areas.

The DfES recent publication Schools for the Future: Exemplar Designs, where many designs have considered how the grounds can enhance learning and links with the community. These include confined urban sites where a number of solutions including play decks and terraces were proposed to create additional space to make up for the lack of social and informal spaces. The use of external spaces is generally carefully considered from all aspects and there are examples where use is being planned and made of site features and spaces:

- At Liverpool Kensington Academy, a core theme is sustainability. Gardens and overflow spaces are being provided, together with ecological design features.
- Reading Academy is using an exemplar design, one of whose principals is the creation of strong links with the outdoors for teaching and pastoral care: featuring courtyards, external teaching areas and an amphitheatre.
- The more traditional use of external space is proposed for Leicester Academy, one of whose stated aims is that the landscape design is of high importance to promote the ‘Healthy Mind, Body & Soul’. The site includes an existing covert of about 0.5 Ha (1.2 acres) mature mixed woodland which have a variety of uses in relation to both the formal and informal curriculum and can also be beneficial to wildlife.
- Kingsmead Primary in Cheshire is a good example, where the school intended to grow food for school lunches as part of the learning experience.

- Good Classrooms of the Future projects are in Bedfordshire (external interactive facilities developed by the Science Museum); Sheffield (Ballifield Primary and Mossbrook Special); and Bournemouth (field studies centre).

## Cost

### *Recommendations 15, 16 and 17*

**Much of our evidence cited cost as a significant barrier to the organisation of educational visits, yet we do not believe that cost alone is responsible for the decline of education outside the classroom, or that simply throwing money at the problem would provide a solution. (Paragraph 56)**

We agree with the Committee's view that cost is one of the complex factors affecting education outside the classroom. We would emphasise the variety of options open to schools, not all of which carry a high cost, for example, using school grounds and local facilities as a rich resource for learning. However, we would not want to underplay the value of pupils experiencing unfamiliar places, particularly as part of a residential experience.

**We urge the DfES to monitor any unintended consequences of the Workforce Agreement to determine whether it has led to an increase in the cost of arranging supply cover during school trips. (Paragraph 57)**

We can appreciate why some people who gave evidence to the Committee saw potential difficulties with the annual limit of 38 hours on cover. However, we believe that this is based upon a misunderstanding of the provisions and purpose of the limit. We are clear that, provided school trips are planned well in advance, there need be no conflict with the cover limit. This view is shared by members of the Workforce Agreement Monitoring.

Teachers must be given better support so they can focus more of their time on their professional role of teaching and on activities which directly improve pupil attainment. The limits on cover introduced in September and the commitment to guaranteed planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time from next September, together with enhanced roles for support staff, present real opportunities to make a difference to each pupil's learning.

Support staff, who have relevant experience or skills, can be deployed by schools to take part in a visit, or to provide cover for an absent teacher. The Department envisages a number of ways in which support staff may help teachers, including acting as Educational Visits Co-ordinator or Group Leaders. Head teachers and local authority advisers will decide on appropriate roles, based on their assessment of the skills and experience of the support staff member.

**Parliament is currently legislating on school transport, an area we considered during our previous inquiry into the draft School Transport Bill. As we recommended in that report, we would expect the DfES to strongly encourage local authorities trialling alternative arrangements for school transport under the new legislative framework to include transport for school trips in their pilot schemes. This should lead to a reduction in costs. (Paragraph 58)**

Most schools organise transport for visits themselves, whereas Local Education Authorities organise children getting to and from school. The School Transport Bill fell when Parliament was prorogued for the General Election. LEAs do not require the School Transport Bill in order to achieve efficiencies in the organisation of school trips, and will be encouraging schools to collaborate. For example, small primaries could decide to take their year 5 pupils swimming at the same time each week and share the transport.

## Centres and operators

### *Recommendations 19 and 20*

**In its Five Year Strategy, the Government proposes that all secondary schools should become independent specialist schools and that LEAs should lose control over school budgets. We recommend that the DfES give serious consideration to how it will structure funding for central outdoor activity services under this new system, or help schools access private and voluntary provision, so that students still have access to high quality outdoor education. (Paragraph 64)**

Under current arrangements, funding for outdoor education can be retained centrally by local authorities. In a number of instances such funding has been delegated to schools. Where this is the case, schools have discretion over their budget to support the provision of outdoor education for their pupils.

The Government has recently consulted on proposals to implement the promise in the Five Year Strategy of guaranteed three-year budgets for all schools, geared to pupil numbers. The proposals include the introduction of a dedicated schools grant that will be paid to local authorities, who will as now be responsible for its allocation to schools. Under the proposed new system, local authorities who retain funding for outdoor education will continue to be able to do so. The Government's intention is that the certainty and predictability of multi-year budget settlements will give schools greater confidence in planning their curriculum and the resources needed to support it. In areas where the funding is delegated to schools, this might include the provision of outdoor education, where at present schools may be reluctant to commit to such provision in the long term.

**It is essential that the DfES and DCMS develop a strategy for the long-term viability of activity centres, helping them to retain staff, build strong links with schools and develop expertise. (Paragraph 65)**

We do not consider it to be the role of central Government to intervene in the running of activity centres operated by private companies or voluntary sector bodies or the operations of other organisations who offer education outside the classroom to schools. The DfES allocates project based funding in some circumstances, where, for example, the quality of what is offered needs to be enhanced or upgraded. It is important for schools to make their own decisions about the opportunities which best meet the needs of their pupils and to assign funding as appropriate from within their own budgets. The longer term certainty of budgets should offer the opportunity for schools to build up relationships with those centres where they feel their pupils' needs are catered for and where provision is of high quality.

## The role of the DfES

### *Recommendations 22 and 23*

**The Department as well as LEAs should take care to ensure that schools and activity centres are not becoming overloaded with risk assessment bureaucracy from different, overlapping organisations, as this can be a significant deterrent. (Paragraph 68)**

We will double-check with LEAs that they only ask schools to do what is reasonably practical to keep pupils safe from injury, which will also protect staff from liability. On the reference to requests for assurances of safety from different overlapping organisations (which we take to refer to requests to activity centres, not to schools), we are in discussions with stakeholders both in adventure and in the wider education visits sector, such as the AALA, British Adventure Holidays Association, OEAP, School Travel Forum, and other industry representatives, about the future scope for common standards.

We commend our partners in the sector for the progress they are making, independently of the Government, in this area. They have also made available a range of guidance which LEAs and schools can choose from, on how to assess risks straightforwardly, e.g. the simple process for assessing and managing risk which the Outdoor Education Advisers Panel published (on its website) in 2004, which includes a clear form and a worked example; the BAALPE guidance on PE and sport; for adventure, AALA guidance on its website; and for e.g. overseas tours, the School Travel Forum website on “de-mystifying risk assessment”.

**The DfES needs to take the lead by demonstrating the low levels of risk attached to school visits. This could perhaps be achieved via a statistical comparison with other everyday activities. Given the relatively low levels of risk attached to outdoor activities, the Department should now give a clear steer to schools that educational innovation outside the classroom is to be welcomed and even to be expected. (Paragraph 69)**

We recommend the guidance of the HSE, which clearly distinguishes hazard from risk. Apparently low-hazard visits could become high-risk unless the school puts proper risk management in place. Through good management, schools can ensure that planned high-hazard activity becomes a low risk. As to a clear steer that education outside the classroom is welcomed and even to be expected, we have done this consistently, most recently in our 15 February announcement, and are happy to continue to do so.

**Department for Education and Skills  
July 2005**

## Appendix 2

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Government's response to the Eighth Report from the Education and Skills Committee, Session 2004–05.

We would like to thank the Select Committee for their full and incisive report. Like the Committee we believe that the ability to read is the key to educational achievement, and we are absolutely committed to building on the good progress that has already been made in this critical area. We support the Committee's argument that improving further the teaching of reading depends on a number of important elements: securing literacy skills early in a child's development; engaging parents; inspiring a love of reading; ensuring that every child has the tailored teaching and support they need; and developing teachers' skills and awareness of the most effective teaching methodologies. In addition to its general conclusions, the committee made a number of specific recommendations to which we have provided responses below.

**The Government should undertake an immediate review of the National Literacy Strategy. This should determine whether the current prescriptions and recommendations are the best available methodology for the teaching of reading in primary schools. We therefore strongly urge the DfES to commission a large scale comparative study, comparing the National Literacy Strategy with 'phonics fast and first' approaches.**

The National Literacy Strategy, now the Primary National Strategy, has an excellent track record in raising standards in literacy. Today standards of English in our primary schools are the highest they have ever been. The approach to teaching reading advocated by the Primary National Strategy is based on high quality national and international research, and places a strong emphasis and early focus on the teaching of synthetic phonics, alongside other teaching strategies that support word recognition, understanding context and knowledge of grammar.

One of the core strengths of the National Literacy Strategy, now the Primary National Strategy, has been its evolution to take account of the latest developments. We believe the time is now right to renew the National Literacy Strategy Framework for Teaching to ensure that it fully reflects the latest research and practice, and to bring it in line with the broader developments within the Strategy itself that have occurred since the Framework was published in 1998. We are therefore committed to developing and embedding a renewed Literacy Framework for teaching, with opportunities for associated professional development, in all schools from September 2006.

We agree with the Select Committee that at this stage we need further evidence and clarification about the relative merits of different approaches to teaching reading, and believe that this analysis is critical to our work to renew the Literacy Framework set out above. Synthetic phonics is already a key element in the Primary National Strategy and the debate now centres not on whether to teach phonics but how. Our ambition is to ensure that even more children are able not only to decode the words on the page, but understand and appreciate what they are reading. We have therefore asked Jim Rose, former Director of Inspection at Ofsted, to conduct an independent review of the full range of best practice

in the teaching of early reading and the strategies that best support children who have fallen behind in reading. This will address the issue of synthetic phonics in the context of a broad range of teaching strategies designed to raise standards in reading.

The review will provide interim findings by November this year, with a full report early in 2006, and will consider, through examination of the available evidence and engagement with the teaching profession and education experts:

- a) What our expectations of best practice in the teaching of early reading and synthetic phonics should be for primary schools and early years settings, including both the content and the pace of teaching;
- b) How this relates to the development of the birth to five framework and the ongoing development and renewal of the National Literacy Framework for teaching;
- c) What range of provision best supports children with significant literacy difficulties and enables them to catch up with their peers, and the relationship of such targeted intervention programmes with synthetic phonics teaching.

In addition, in conducting his review, Jim Rose will have the opportunity to draw on the findings of an independent systematic literature review of phonics use in the teaching and application of reading and spelling which we have commissioned from Professor Greg Brooks and Carole Torgerson. This delivers on the public commitment we made, following an independently chaired seminar of key researchers and practitioners in phonics teaching held by the Department in 2003, to publish an analysis of existing research on phonics teaching methodologies. The aim of the literature review is to identify what is known from existing literature about how effective different approaches to phonics teaching are in comparison with each other, including the specific area of analytic versus synthetic phonics. Findings are to be published later this year.

As part of his review, Jim Rose, will be conducting a full analysis of the evidence already available of what is working now in schools and early years settings. He will be commissioning Ofsted to undertake some rapid review work to observe the features of “best practice” in synthetic phonics and in using the National Literacy framework for teaching. The findings of this rapid review work will be a key piece of evidence for Jim Rose to draw on in his final report.

We are also determined to address issues not only of design, but also of implementation. To this end we will be looking to examine the practical questions of how we build on the current implementation of phonics teaching, through a pilot in 200 schools and early years settings from September. The pilots will be based on the Primary National Strategy’s ‘Playing with Sounds’ programme, which has all the key components of a synthetic phonics programme, and will provide a vehicle to examine a number of different issues raised in the debate thus far, such as the pace of phonics teaching in the Foundation Stage, the application of phonics through play based approaches to learning, and the ongoing support and training needed to build capacity in early literacy. We will ensure that the work in the pilots is informed by any interim recommendations from Jim Rose and conversely that he is able to draw on findings from the pilots in his final report.

Overall we believe that the combination of the three measures that have been established—an independent review of the existing evidence, a rapid survey of what is working in the field, and extensive pilots focusing on issues of implementation—will achieve clarity around what best practice is and how it can be delivered most effectively. When we have a clear set of recommendations from this review and pilot work we will be keen to act on this advice immediately. We are concerned that a large scale trial, which would perpetuate an artificially rigid distinction between different approaches to teaching reading, would slow this process down.

**The DfES should commission an independent evaluation of the trends in reading standards among primary school children which would make clear the scale and nature of the problem faced, and provide a further basis for policy work.**

The National Curriculum tests are a highly effective means of assessing progress of children against the standards of the national curriculum. Within that context, the QCA processes for maintaining standards have been submitted to rigorous independent scrutiny and have been found to be among the best in the world. We are also now able to undertake more sophisticated analyses of test scripts to identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning at both a national and a schools level. This information is invaluable to schools in shaping their teaching and learning and for the Department in developing policy.

The QCA works constantly to refine and improve their procedures for maintaining test standards over time. The procedures are complex and serve the primary purpose of National Curriculum tests which is to measure the progress of each individual pupil against National Curriculum expectations, rather than to measure aggregate standards over time.

In addition to the National Curriculum tests, international surveys such as the Progress in Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) provide independent benchmarks and analysis of reading trends. Preparations are now underway for the next study in 2006. We are also able to turn to independent Ofsted evaluations which provide plentiful quantitative and qualitative evidence on the scale and the nature of the challenges.

In light of both the range and quality of the information currently available to assess trends in reading standards, we do not believe that a further independent evaluation is necessary in this area.

**The DfES should work with the Teacher Training Agency to review ITT courses, ensuring that teachers are fully aware of different approaches to the teaching of reading, and what the research evidence says about the effectiveness of those different methods. We further recommend that institutions offering ITT should include modules about the literacy needs of children at different stages of the process of learning to read within the current 5 to 11 age span and that programmes of continuing professional development should be made available to teachers already in service.**

The National Strategies and the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) already work very closely together to ensure that through Initial Teacher Training teachers gain a full understanding of the teaching of literacy and reading for children at all stages of their development. At primary level all teacher training institutes have been visited within the last two years to

ensure that training programmes, including those for reading, are in line with the National Strategies approaches.

Ofsted findings suggest that this close working between the National Strategies and the TTA is paying dividends. In 2003 Ofsted reported on quality and standards in primary initial teacher training, based on inspection findings from 1998–2002. They reported that trainees' subject knowledge and the quality of training in English had improved significantly over the four year period.

In 2001–2002 the subject knowledge of trainees in English was judged to be good or better in 80% of cases. At the same time the quality of training in English was rated good or better in 90% of cases, and coverage of the NLS was found to “always good and often very good.”

An ongoing commitment to the professional development of teachers is a cornerstone of the National Strategies' approach to raising standards in teaching and learning. This year we are offering 75,000 days of training for teachers in English. A specific focus this year will be to offer 1 day training in reading and phonics to two teachers from every school.

Moving forward we will work closely with the TTA to ensure that ITT programmes are able fully to take account of the findings of Jim Rose's independent review as well as our wider work to renew the National Literacy Strategy Framework for Teaching. Similarly the considerable training and professional development programmes offered to in service teachers through the Primary National Strategy will be revised accordingly.

**There should be continued Government investment in training at all levels in the Early Years sector.**

We fully support this recommendation and have a range of activity already underway. For 2004–06 we have provided local authorities with £129.9 million to undertake a range of workforce training and development activities for the early years sector. These activities include the provision of sufficient training:

- to meet the requirements of the National Standards for Under Eights Day Care and Childminding; and
- to ensure that Foundation Stage practitioners receive an average of four days' training and development a year.

We have introduced the early years sector endorsed Foundation Degree for those working in the sector. This confers 'senior practitioner' status on those successfully completing it. Take-up to date has been very encouraging. A recent evaluation of the Foundation Degree showed that employers' views of it were overwhelmingly positive. They felt it met a need for early years' workers, offered a career pathway and provided recognition for workers and the sector as a whole.

We have also piloted an employment based early years registered teacher programme for those working in the early years who wish to continue in the sector as qualified teachers.

We have introduced a new qualification, the National Professional Qualification for Integrated Centre Leadership, for leaders within multi-agency, early years settings. The

programme lasts for one year and we expect around 400 people to undertake the qualification from September 2005.

As part of the current consultation on the Children's Workforce Strategy, we are seeking views on a range of proposals we have made for developing the early years and childcare workforce to meet the challenges of the ten year strategy for childcare. Following the consultation, we will be working closely with the newly-established Children's Workforce Development Council and the Teacher Training Agency to agree with HM Treasury a work programme for implementing the agreed outcomes from the consultation.

**Every setting outside a home which offers early education should have a trained teacher on its staff.**

The latest Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) research report sets out that children in settings which have staff with higher qualifications, and particularly qualified teachers (QTS), made better progress and contributed to better outcomes for children. We have therefore already taken steps to ensure QTS teachers continue to be assigned to every nursery and reception class in a school in order to directly provide and supervise the teaching and the learning opportunities for children in the setting and we have made this clear in the planned Schools Workforce Pay and Conditions document. We also continue to ensure that non-maintained early education settings have access to QTS teachers with a ratio of 1 teacher to every 10 settings.

At present, it is a requirement of designation that a children's centre should have a minimum of 0.5 QTS teacher involvement. In the Children's Workforce Strategy, published in April for consultation until 22 July, it is proposed that there should be an early years professional in every children's centre by 2010 and in every full day care setting by 2015. It is proposed that the Children's Workforce Development Council and the Teacher Development Agency should work together to produce a coherent set of occupational and professional standards for early years practitioners at all levels. If adopted, these proposals would be likely to have some effect on the future staffing of children's centres and full day care settings.

**Government must ensure that suitable programmes are available to all those children who require intensive support, and that they are delivered by highly qualified professionals.**

Through the Primary National Strategy we have made a comprehensive suite of targeted intervention programmes available to schools to help those pupils who have fallen behind. Ofsted's 2005 report on the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies says that most schools make use of these intervention programmes to support pupils with difficulties, with many opting to use Early Literacy Support and Further Literacy Support. The report states that "Headteachers are confident that the pupils involved have made progress".

We are building on the support currently on offer in two ways. We are aware, both as a result of Ofsted monitoring and our own evaluations, that there is more work to do to strengthen the management and leadership of effective intervention to support children who have fallen behind their peers. This is a major focus for this year and we are developing materials and support for school leaders and managers to help them plan and develop their intervention and targeted support work better.

We also realise that there is more work needed to identify the most successful approaches to supporting children with very significant difficulties in literacy. These are children who frequently have a range of Special Education Needs, and who for a variety of social, educational or emotional reasons, need a different kind and intensity of support to get them reading and writing.

The KPMG Foundation is establishing a project with the Institute of Education and a range of charitable and corporate funders, to provide Reading Recovery to children in disadvantaged areas. Reading Recovery is a programme which has a strong track record in helping this particular group of children, and we are keen to take the opportunity presented by the KPMG Foundation's generous offer to consider a range of issues around the implementation and delivery of targeted support in literacy to children facing very significant difficulties. We are therefore making £5 million available to the project, which as a whole will provide intensive reading support to 4000 children over three years who experience the most significant difficulties in literacy, and will look to trial a range of implementation models with a view to achieving a sustainable and cost effective approach to delivering this type of provision in the future.

To strengthen our approach in this area further we have asked Jim Rose, as part of his wider review, to consider the range of provision needed to support children with literacy difficulties, and we will be building his findings into the Primary National Strategy plan for 2006–07.

**We recommend that the DfES commission further research in the area of oral phonological awareness training, to determine the effectiveness of the intensive support programmes comprised within the National Literacy Strategy, compared to other “catch up” programmes.**

We will ask Jim Rose to consider existing research on the strength of oral phonological awareness training as part of his independent review of best practice in the teaching of reading.

## Appendix 3

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Sixth Report from the Education and Skills Committee, Session 2004–05, National Skills Strategy: 14–19 Education, HC 37-I and HC 37-II.

### The skills agenda

#### *Skills and productivity*

##### *Conclusion/Recommendation 1*

**There was a broad consensus amongst our witnesses that improving the skills of those in the labour market would assist in improving the productivity of businesses, but only if the other factors identified as important were also addressed. A more highly skilled workforce is therefore seen as necessary, although it is not by itself a sufficient condition for increased productivity.**

Skills are one of the key drivers to increased productivity. The Government's national Skills Strategy is making the necessary steps to address the nation's skills shortages by ensuring employers have the skills needed for successful businesses and individuals have the skills needed to be employable and personally fulfilled.

International studies show that lower levels of skills in the UK workforce have led to lower output per employee, but the gap with competitors is narrowing. The Government recognises that skills are only one of the many factors that lead to differences in productivity. Analysis shows that lower UK skills levels contribute up to 20% of the productivity gap with France and Germany, but the US advantage over the UK for example is driven largely by their intensive use of physical capital.

### Skills training or general education

##### *Conclusion/Recommendation 2*

**If the Government is serious about addressing the needs of business, it is vital for it to be aware of what businesses want from young people when they emerge from the education system into the labour market. The education system aims to assist individuals to achieve the highest level of attainment possible in their chosen field. An employer is looking for someone who can make a significant contribution to the business rather than someone necessarily with particular qualifications. These two approaches are not inherently incompatible, but currently educators and employers do not work together effectively enough.**

The Government recognises the need to be aware of what employers want from young people and for educators and employers to work more effectively together. Our focus remains firmly fixed on delivering the improvements to the system that employers demand. That is why the Government listened to employers' views and concerns as we prepared our reforms for the education of 14 to 19 year-olds and in light of those discussions continues to develop a coherent strategy for engaging employers.

These plans include:

- a) equipping young people with skills that are relevant to the workplace by:
  - continuing with successful Increased Flexibility Programme;
  - giving greater emphasis to English, maths and ICT skills within GCSEs and the new Diplomas for 14 to 19 year olds;
  - encouraging more people to gain higher level skills in education or in the workplace;
  - helping schools to deliver work-related learning with the help of 300,000 employers. This process is supported by organisations such as Education Business Partnerships, and currently subject to a strategic review by the LSC;
  - focusing on developing skills such as team-working and enterprise skills; and
  - giving more young people the opportunity to apply for an Apprenticeship.
- b) introducing a new National Employer Training Programme (NETP) which will deliver publicly-funded skills training in a way that is directly led by the needs of employers;
- c) establishing better links between universities and business to share ideas and innovations through the Higher Education Innovation Fund;
- d) giving employers more opportunity to identify those skills which can improve the success and productivity of their businesses, and to support regional plans for economic development through the new Sector Skills Agreements and Regional Skills Partnerships;
- e) ensuring that employers through their Sector Skills councils play a central role in developing a range of specialised diplomas that have currency in the labour market and meet the needs of employers.

### **Conclusion/Recommendation 3**

**Our judgement is that what employers want most of all is young people who are literate, numerate and work-prepared (that is accepting responsibility, open to learning and able to work with others) when leaving the education system, rather than people who have had training in specific skills. The means by which this is achieved, however may well be education based on real life tasks.**

The Government agrees. This analysis mirrors exactly the employer-led messages which have guided a wide range of existing education and training policies and programmes. These include the key skills qualifications (Communication, Applied Number, ICT—introduced in 2000); the *Skills for Life* strategy (2001); Vocational GCSEs (2002); the Increased Flexibility Programme (2002); Apprenticeships (relaunched in 2004) and the wider key skills qualifications (Working with Others, Problem Solving, Improving Learning and Performance—updated in 2004). In all of these, the focus has been on

making learning relevant and motivating by grounding it in actual work or work-related tasks.

The 14–19 White Paper sets out two main ways in which we will now build further upon these foundations. First, we will ensure that practical, applied skills are included in all English, maths and ICT qualifications for young people and adults. From 2008 (English, ICT) and 2009 (maths) all GCSEs will include new ‘functional skills’ components, which must be passed if a grade C or higher is to be achieved. Similarly, functional skills will be required within the new specialised Diplomas. We have asked the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) to lead the development of these new components, working with employers, HE and other users to ensure that teaching and assessment is related to every day tasks (e.g. using readily available software for ICT programmes).

Second, in addition to the functional skills, we will develop a clear framework to underpin opportunities for all young people to develop the thinking, learning and personal skills that typify the work-prepared. This will build on the wider key skills (see above); the 14–19 Working Group’s proposals on common knowledge, skills and attributes; and we have asked for QCA’s advice on embedding thinking, learning and personal skills in the curriculum at Key Stage 3 (ages 11–14) and across the 14–19 phase. The specialised Diplomas will be designed to provide the blend of generic and specific skills needed as the starting point for sustainable employability.

The framework of thinking, learning and personal skills will inform the delivery of education based on real life tasks, and so act as a powerful tool for integrating learning about or at work with other forms of learning. The framework will also inform development of the Extended Project, a single piece of work requiring planning, preparation, research and independent working. Learners destined for higher education will be expected to demonstrate similar personal and interpersonal abilities as those who pursue work-oriented learning.

Finally, the White Paper on *Skills: Getting on in business, getting on in work* also emphasises our intentions to equip young people with the literacy, language and numeracy skills necessary for the world of work. These reforms will ensure that irrespective of where a learner begins or continues their learning journey; whether at school; college; post-16 provider; or in the workplace, they have access to the same level of ambition and a level playing field of the same teaching, learning, assessment and qualification infrastructure.

## Working across Government

### *Conclusion/Recommendation 4*

**The DfES has a tricky balancing act to perform. It is the lead department for education and training, but it must always guard against seeing things solely from the provider’s point of view. It would not be the best use of the substantial resources being committed to this sector if policies on skills, and the education and training arising from them, become dominated by supply side education and training, rather than being integrated with policy on the other productivity drivers by engaging with the decision makers on boards and in senior management in employing organisations.**

*14–19 Education and Skills* is a White Paper which was agreed across Government, and the different Departments of State are working together, as necessary, in the delivery of reforms. For example, work on Apprenticeships is taken forward by a cross-Departmental Steering Group and the review of financial support for 16–19 year olds is led by a Ministerial tripartite group (from HMT, DfES and DWP), with officials working as a cross-departmental team to develop and deliver reforms. A 14–19 external advisory group, chaired by the Minister of State for Schools, is being established to involve a range of practitioners to support effective delivery of the 14–19 reforms.

As the Education and Skills Committee’s report states, the DfES is not solely concerned with the suppliers of education and training. The primary focus of the DfES is always on outcomes for children, families, young people and learners and, ultimately, on reforms which improve social inclusion and skills and productivity for the nation. The introduction to the Department’s 5 Year Strategy published in July 2004 makes clear that the DfES is fully aware that “the parts of the system are (and are seen as being) interlinked and interdependent”.

One of the main ways that the 14–19 White Paper demonstrates this interdependence in the system is through employers in Sector Skills Councils taking the lead (working with Higher Education, with the Qualification and Curriculum Authority (QCA) and with other stakeholders) in designing new specialised Diplomas and in establishing national Skills Academies which will have a leading role in delivering the new specialised Diplomas.

## **14–19: a separate phase?**

### **Conclusion/Recommendation 5**

**It is vital that, in putting forward initiatives to address problems in 14–19 education, the links backwards into Key Stages 3, 2 and 1, and the links forward into Further Education and Higher Education, are not overlooked.**

The Government supports the Select Committee’s recommendation that in addressing problems in 14–19 education, we should consider links backwards into the previous Key Stages.

If all pupils are to make the most of the opportunities open to them in the 14–19 phase then by 14 years old they need a firm grounding in the basics and need to be engaged in a broad and rich curriculum. The 14–19 White Paper confirmed our commitment to review the Key Stage 3 curriculum in order to improve its coherence in subjects where there are problems, to reduce the overall level of prescription, and allow more scope for schools to stretch their pupils and help those who fall behind expected standards to catch up. Through the Secondary National Strategy and the New Relationship with Schools, we will ensure that schools are supported and challenged to use this additional freedom. The White Paper also set out how we plan to strengthen our emphasis on English and maths, in particular by expecting schools to focus systematically on those pupils who arrive from primary school below the expected level.

In reviewing Key Stage 3, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority will consider how any recommended changes will impact on the transition from Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 and will advise the Secretary of State if there is a risk of disjuncture between the Key Stages.

The Government also agrees with the Committee that links forward into Higher Education should be kept in mind as the 14–19 agenda evolves. We already reflect those links in our internal programme management arrangements. It is already the case that changes in higher education (HE) take appropriate account of the progression of 14–19 students in school and college. A notable example is Foundation Degrees, which will provide a valuable way of meeting the needs of young people and mature students coming from vocational routes. The White Paper makes clear that higher education will have a role, alongside employers, in designing specialised Diplomas to ensure they provide a good route into higher education.

## Educational maintenance allowances

### *Conclusion/Recommendations 6 and 7*

**If the national implementation of EMAs is as effective as it has been in the pilot areas, it will significantly improve staying on rates. We therefore welcome the decision to implement EMAs nationally. We also welcome the way in which the initiative was piloted and assessed before the national roll-out. This is the approach to policy development and implementation that we would like the DfES to employ as a matter of course.**

**It is unacceptable that young people can leave school at sixteen and go into employment without any guarantee that they will receive education or training in the period up until they are eighteen. We believe that one of the main tests of whether the Government's plans are successful will be whether the amount of training for young people in employment increases substantially.**

In England, more than 293,000 young people are receiving EMA payments under the national scheme as at 10 May 2005. By 2006, EMA will support over 400,000 young people in staying on in education or training thereby improving the education and economic prospects for themselves, their families and the nation as a whole.

In the pilot, EMA increased Year 12 (age 16) participation in full-time education by 5.9 percentage points amongst eligible young people, with a further increase in Year 13 (age 17) due to improved retention. EMA reduced the number of young people entering the 'Not in Education, Employment or Training' (NEET) group at 16 by 2.7 percentage points.

The projection is that national EMA will increase participation in education at Year 12 by 3.8 percentage points, and by 4.1 percentage points amongst Year 13s, across the full cohort.

The Government estimates this will mean that in its first year (2004–05) EMA will cause an additional 35,000 young people to participate in further education, and reduce the number in NEET by 9,000. When fully rolled out in 2006–07 we estimate that EMA will be causing an additional 72,000 young people to be participating in further education.

The Government wants to ensure that every young person has the financial support and incentives they need to participate in learning. That is why from April 2006, we will be removing the distinction between education and training by extending Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit to the families of unwaged trainees on work based learning programmes

organised by Government. EMA will also be extended to unwaged trainees and will replace the Minimum Training Allowance. This will cover around 100,000 young people a year on Entry to Employment and Programme Led Pathways to Apprenticeship. We are also working to achieve minimum pay levels of £70–80 a week for Apprentices in England.

We know that at any one time there are around 150,000 16 and 17 year olds in the UK who are in employment with no training. To increase access to training options for this group, we are allocating £80 million over two years to pilot a Learning Agreement in eight areas of England.

The Government is also allocating an additional £60 million over two years to pilot Activity Agreements and an Activity Allowance in eight areas of England. The pilots will offer 16–17 year olds who are not in education, employment or training support in return for a commitment to progress towards formal learning.

## 14-19 Pathfinders

### *Conclusion/Recommendation 8*

**We welcome the establishment of the 14–19 Pathfinders and the programme of independent evaluation that has been put in place. Given the Government’s commitment to a greater provision of education and training collaboratively between institutions in an area, we recommend that guidance based on what has been learned from the 14–19 Pathfinders is issued so that those in charge of making such collaborative arrangements are advised on what works well, and what issues are likely to cause problems.**

One of the key aims of the Government’s 14–19 Pathfinders Programme is to identify good practice, and to make this widely available to all those involved in planning and delivering the 14–19 phase of education and training.

A manual of Guidance and Good Practice is being produced to draw together lessons and good practice from across the 39 pathfinders. As well as presenting guidance and case studies on a number of themes, the manual will set out successful delivery models of collaboration in different socio-economic and geographical circumstances. It will also highlight practical tips and strategies for overcoming barriers and for sustaining the good practice in the longer term.

The manual will be made available as a web-based tool in academic year 2005–06, and we will implement a well-targeted and focussed communications strategy to ensure that all key stakeholders can benefit from it.

In the meantime, a pathfinder site on the DfES 14–19 Gateway ([www.dfes.gsi.gov.uk/14–19](http://www.dfes.gsi.gov.uk/14-19)) presents information on the programme, and includes video footage of pathfinders, and good practice case studies. Findings from the national evaluation of the programme are also made available there. In addition, pathfinders themselves are networking locally and regionally through conferences, workshops and newsletters, to share good practice amongst each other and with non-pathfinder areas.

The Government is also exploring the use of ‘champions’ in 2005–06 academic year, not only to disseminate good practice but also to help partnerships adopt, embed and replicate the good practice on collaborative working from the pathfinders programme.

## 14–19 reform

### *Current curriculum and qualifications*

#### **Conclusion/ Recommendation 9**

**One of the main problems with the current situation is that for those pupils who find study for GCSEs and A levels uninteresting or unmanageable there is no obvious main alternative.**

The Government recognises that GCSEs and A levels are not necessarily the most suitable qualifications for all. Some alternatives do already exist. We have introduced 8 GCSEs in vocational subjects and there are 10 A levels in Applied Subjects.

The Government wants to go further to meet the needs of all young people. QCA is working with awarding bodies to develop GCSEs which contain a common core, but then have a choice of general or vocational options within them. GCSEs of this sort are being piloted for science and history.

The introduction of specialised Diplomas will provide new opportunities for young people to take qualifications at which they can succeed and which then prepare them to progress to the next level.

#### **Conclusion/Recommendation 10**

**In common with the qualification system as a whole, but perhaps more significantly, given that it is a work-based programme, there is no credit system for Apprenticeships, so anyone who does not complete an apprenticeship would have to start from the beginning if they wished to resume their training.**

Apprenticeship frameworks contain three main assessed components: an assessment of occupational competence, an NVQ; a vocationally related qualification which tests the knowledge and understanding underpinning the skills required for the occupation; and transferable key skills.

It is not accurate to say that an apprentice with a break in their training would have to start from the beginning. Their achievements towards the Apprenticeship completion certificate are portable, as are completed NVQ units. In addition, QCA, Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA) are working with Sector Skills Councils to make sure that the development of the QCA proposals on a Framework for Achievement is capable of applying to apprenticeships.

An apprentice who starts an apprenticeship develops knowledge and skills throughout their apprenticeship, gaining qualifications that are valuable in their own right but which are components of the apprenticeship. In that sense apprenticeships are a credit based system already. When completed, the apprenticeship is recognised by the sector through the issuing of an Apprenticeship completion certificate.

We will continue to improve the quality and broaden the reach of employment-based training through Apprenticeships, which will in due course be integrated within the new specialised Diploma arrangements.

## **Government proposals**

### ***Conclusion/Recommendation 11***

**The Government had asked the Working Group to look at ways of establishing a unified framework of qualifications, and Charles Clarke's response when asked about how its proposals met his five tests was positive. The reaction to the Government's change of heart is unsurprising, given that for two years the impression had been that Ministers were in favour of more radical change.**

The Government is grateful to the Working Group on 14–19 Reform for their work in developing a challenging vision of the future of 14–19 education and training. The Government shares, and has built upon, the Working Group's analysis of the weaknesses and strengths of the existing system and of the way forward. As the Committee report acknowledges, we have adopted many of the major recommendations in the report, such as the need for a strong core to all young people's learning and a radical transformation of the vocational pathways available to young people.

### ***Conclusion/Recommendation 12 and 13***

**Ultimately the Government decided that it was not worth the risk to change from known and understood qualifications and move to a system which, while it mirrored practice in much of Europe was unfamiliar in England.**

**The ten year implementation was clearly also problematic. The need to sustain political consensus for change across two or three Parliaments on matters as politically contentious as educational standards and outcomes was always fraught with difficulties. To have set out to bring in the unified diploma but to have failed could have seriously damaged confidence in the education system. Nevertheless, we urge that the matter of integration of GCSEs, A levels and vocational qualifications within a unified diploma be kept under review.**

The White Paper sets out a bold reform that builds on existing strengths. It addresses historic weaknesses: quality, functional skills, staying on rate, choice, and tailoring to the individual. It seeks to transform radically the opportunities and life chances of all young people.

In the light of developments that are outlined in the White Paper, we will discuss with employers and universities whether their needs are being met and the case for introducing greater challenge and breadth alongside A levels. The Government will review progress in 2008.

## The new diplomas

### **Conclusions/Recommendations 14 and 15**

It is imperative that as large a cross section of employers as possible is drawn into the development process for the new diplomas. The Sector Skills Councils and employer organisations must do their utmost to reach small and medium-sized enterprises and seek their views, as well as the views of the large corporations. Employers must seize this opportunity to influence what is taught as preparation for work in their sectors. If they do not, they will not be able to blame others if entrants to the labour market do not possess the skills they are seeking.

**The weakness and fragmentation of the vocational education that is currently on offer is a serious problem, and if the new awards succeed in attracting students and are valued by employers that will signal a substantial achievement.**

The Government believes that employers will have a key role in determining what the 'lines of learning' should be and in deciding what the specialised Diplomas should contain. Indeed, employers have a real opportunity here to design qualifications which deliver the skills, attributes and knowledge they require. Employer involvement can also make the difference between an exciting and useful exercise in learning and a course which fills time but has no value in the labour market. The specialised Diplomas will only matter to young people if they are valued by employers. Work on developing the specialised Diplomas has started and Sector Skills Councils have begun to consult their employers on aspects of the new qualifications.

The Government recognises that good quality courses are available, but too many young people are undertaking poor quality training leading to narrow qualifications which are not widely enough recognised in the labour market or by higher education institutions to be really useful to them. It is vital we provide high quality routes which equip young people with the knowledge and skills they need for further learning and skilled employment.

### **Conclusion/Recommendation 16**

**We also welcome the fact that Apprenticeships will be brought within the diploma framework. This was part of the Working Group's proposals, and addresses the concern that there is no specific qualification relating to apprenticeships. Apprenticeship will now be a qualification, rather than just a programme of study.**

We will continue to improve the quality and broaden the reach of employment-based training through Apprenticeships, which will in due course be integrated within the new specialised Diploma arrangements.

### **Conclusion/Recommendation 17**

**For those who consider that the quest for a unified qualifications framework should not be abandoned, the review of methods of providing challenge and breadth in A levels promised for 2008, which coincides with the introduction of the first four diploma lines, might provide some hope. Once one sort of diploma is in place, it might make the unified diploma seen more achievable.**

The Government's response to Conclusions/Recommendations 12 and 13 addresses these points.

### ***A credit system***

#### ***Conclusion/ Recommendation 18***

**The Government mentions briefly a plan for a credit system for diplomas which would allow young people to complete qualifications as adults, with the provision of links across to adult qualifications. A system of credits would act as a real incentive for some young people to continue in education and training and we strongly support the Government's proposals.**

The Government is aware of the benefits the credits system brings to adults and will consider the scope for coordinating specialised Diplomas with the credit framework proposed for adults.

### ***The burden of assessment***

#### ***Conclusion/Recommendation 19***

**In bringing forward its detailed plans on assessment, the Government should clarify whether it considers the burden of assessment across Years 11, 12 and 13 is appropriate**

The Government is committed to reducing the overall burden of assessment.

At the moment for students in Year 11, stretch comes from taking large numbers of GCSEs. Where this increases breadth it can be highly valuable. However, sometimes young people are taking several very similar GCSEs. In these instances we need to make sure that young people can stretch themselves in other ways, such as accelerating to achieve level 2 or level 3 qualifications early or through recognised enrichment activities. This may also help to reduce the burden of assessment on young people in Year 11.

In addition, we think that there is scope to lessen the coursework burden, particularly by reducing it where the same knowledge and skills can be tested reliably in other ways. We have asked QCA to undertake a review of GCSE coursework and look at ways to reduce the cumulative burden of coursework.

At A level we plan to reduce the number of assessment units without changing the content. Currently most A levels have 6 units, each separately assessed and sometimes by more than one exam paper. In future most A levels will have four larger units, covering the same amount of content, but only four assessments. This will reduce the assessment burden by a third.

The Government also seeks to maximise the potential of e-assessment. For example, QCA are already exploring a range of different forms of moderation of practical assessment in vocational and occupational qualifications. This should minimise the assessment burden on students, teachers and trainers.

## Emphasising English and Maths

### *Conclusion/Recommendation 20*

**The changes being proposed to re-emphasise the functional elements of English and Maths in GCSE, and to recognise the achievement of those who achieve the functional elements only, are welcome.**

The Government welcomes the Select Committee's views. New functional English and maths components—building on existing GCSE, Key Skills and Skills for Life provision—will be introduced within reformed GCSEs, to act as a guarantee to employers of a grounding in these basics. The intention is that no-one will be able to achieve GCSE grades A\*–C in English or maths without achieving Level 2 in these components. GCSE ICT will also be reviewed to identify a functional ICT component.

These new functional English, maths and ICT components will also be available as discrete qualifications for those unable to achieve the full GCSEs. As with the current Key Skills qualifications and Skills for Life tests, these will be available for use both at Key Stage 4 and by all post-16 learners (including Apprentices and those taking the new specialised Diplomas). This will secure clarity, coherence and consistency of provision for all candidates post-14 and will realise the ambitions of both the 14–19 and Skills White Papers for a single, progressive series of awards for all levels and ages.

## Implementation

### *Conclusion/Recommendation 21*

**We hope that the changes in the qualifications and curriculum being brought forward will lead to an increase in attainment and in staying-on rates. The proposals on vocational education are serious and build on much of what the Working Group had proposed, and the changes to GCSE and A level, though relatively modest, should make real differences to students. The next stage is crucial: the design of the curriculum and qualifications, and the development of the ways in which they are to be delivered will determine the success or otherwise of the Government's plans.**

The Government agrees with the Select Committee's conclusion that the next stages of the 14–19 reforms—curriculum design, system reform and implementation—are crucial. The Secretary of State has made it abundantly clear that 14–19 implementation is one of her top priorities for this Parliament. We are committed to publishing an implementation plan for the White Paper after the summer break.

The DfES already has rigorous and effective project management disciplines in place to ensure delivery of its strategies, including the 14–19 agenda. The Department has reviewed and updated the project management arrangements to include all the commitments in the 14–19 White Paper. As mentioned above (recommendation 4) a 14–19 external advisory group chaired by the Minister of State for Schools, is being established to involve practitioners in supporting effective delivery of the 14–19 reforms.

## Infrastructure and delivery

### *Structure, funding and organisation*

#### **Conclusion/Recommendation 22**

**If the Government wants collaboration between various local providers it is going to have to move more quickly on the issue of differential funding. It is clear that there is very little scope in the funding allocations made up to 2007–8 for colleges to find money from within their own budgets for collaborative work. Extra money, either grants for collaborative work, or a significant increase in money available to colleges more generally, is going to be required. The logic of establishing a unified 14–19 curriculum is that it should be supported by a unified 14–19 funding methodology.**

The Spending Review 2002 was the largest ever investment in Further Education (FE). Total funding for FE is set to rise by over £1 billion by 2005–06 when compared with 2002–03. The Government has brought up funding levels for FE as it said it would without penalising schools. LSC's funding rates per course in FE have been rising faster than school sixth forms—the gap has narrowed.

It is too early to say what the outcome of the 2004 Spending Review will mean for funding rates for 2006–07 and beyond. We have always said that continuing progress will depend on resources being available.

The Government recognises that there is more to overall levels of funding than differences in funding rates and acknowledges that there are other differences between school and FE funding, although these are difficult to quantify. Existing planned reforms and stability for school and LSC funding systems will free up providers to be more responsive to learner needs, including joining up resources to provide the highest quality provision.

The LSC flexible funding pot proposed in the 14–19 White Paper is designed to provide for additional costs arising from collaboratively delivered 14–19 programmes which are not covered from core funding e.g. coordination; transport etc. We have yet to determine the level of funding or detail of administrative arrangements for the flexible pot, but it is important that it should take account of best practice from the Increased Flexibility Programme (IFP) and 14–19 Pathfinders which are currently administered by LSC on behalf of and in agreement with local LEA–LSC partnerships.

#### **Conclusion/Recommendation 23**

**Increased and improved vocational education will require more staff who are suitably qualified in their subject areas and who are well-trained. Most of this vocational education is likely to take place within or via further education colleges, as they are more likely to have the existing provision. It will be difficult to attract these staff if they are rewarded less well than their counterparts in schools, and less well than if they were employed in industry or commerce.**

General further education colleges and sixth form colleges are autonomous and independent corporations. As such they negotiate their own pay and conditions of service with staff and their unions without Government involvement.

Pay and recruitment arrangements in the sector are diverse. This reflects the fact that colleges have utilised the flexibilities available to them in order to meet differing local needs. The Government has no plans to change these arrangements.

However, the Government is making the largest ever investment in the FE sector. Total funding for FE is set to rise by over £1 billion by 2005–06 when compared with 2002–03.

#### **Conclusion/Recommendation 24**

**It is hoped that the conclusions of the Strategic Area Reviews undertaken across the country will be used as a starting point for discussions on 14–19 provision under these proposals so there is no duplication of effort.**

Strategic Area Reviews (StARs) are led by the Local LSC and encompass all post-16 provision. The aim is to improve quality and standards by reconfiguring FE College, Sixth Form College, school sixth form, work based learning and adult & community provision, as determined by local circumstances and priorities. StARs will in principle deal with unhelpful overlaps and identify gaps in provision as well as address breadth, quality and collaboration issues. Naturally, in reviewing post-16 provision local LSCs will have regard for the needs of 14–19 year olds in line with the Government's *14–19* and *Success for All* strategies.

#### **Conclusion/Recommendation 25**

**We welcome the proposed expansion of collaborative working between schools, colleges and other institutions and organisations. However, there must be proper co-ordination in every area in order to make sure that collaborative provision works effectively and that institutions do not put their own desires for expanded sixth form provision above the general needs of provision in any given locality.**

Successful schools will have a right to establish sixth form provision where there is pupil and parent demand and where this extends quality and choice for local students. Additional sixth form provision in such circumstances will support the aims of increasing learning opportunities for 14–19 year olds in an area.

#### **Conclusion/Recommendation 26**

**More generally, there is a tension between the pressure for increased collective working between institutions and greater independence for schools, including the ability to become foundation schools. With LEAs being asked to perform a more strategic role but with few levers to encourage recalcitrant schools to do things they would prefer not to do, Government policy seems to be working in two incompatible directions.**

The Government encourages high quality collaboration as a key *complement* to strong, autonomous institutions: the stronger the institutions within a partnership, the stronger that partnership is likely to be. In several local authority areas a majority of all secondary schools are already foundation schools or Voluntary Aided schools, and there is no evidence that collaboration in these areas is weak. The Government is encouraging partnerships with diverse and inclusive membership, for example through Education

Improvement Partnerships which would include all types of maintained schools, independent schools, FE colleges and voluntary and private sector providers.

There is widespread recognition amongst both schools and local authorities of the benefits of collaborative working, and of the fact that partnerships can deliver broader and better services together than any school can on its own: this will be particularly significant, for instance, in ensuring maximum breadth of provision at 14–19 and in improving behaviour and attendance. Recognition of the benefits of partnership working, in itself, is proving to be a powerful incentive to collaborate.

School Improvement Partners, who will be contracted by Local Authorities, will also consider and challenge individual schools on what contribution they are making to their local learning community.

## **Information, advice and guidance**

### ***Conclusion/Recommendation 27, 28 and 29***

**Pupils are entitled to receive the most objective advice possible on their future education and career options, and careers guidance staff in schools must be fully aware of the different options available in order to allow pupils to make the most appropriate choices.**

**If Connexions becomes more focused on issues arising from Every Child Matters, and continues to concentrate on matters relating to those not in education or employment and training, it will emphasise the problem that, though it is designed to provide a universal service, a targeted service for those in most need will always be the priority at the expense of young people in general.**

**Connexions is a young organisation and if it is to be changed the reasons need to be sound. The service providing information, advice and guidance to young people needs stability and high quality provision. Constant reconfiguring of the service will cause confusion, and confusion about the provision of advice could have knock-on effects for the rest of the Government's plans.**

The Government agrees that young people need high quality information, advice and guidance. This was emphasised in the 14–19 Education and Skills White Paper

The Government will be looking at how this can best be delivered in the context of the Youth Green Paper which will be published in due course.