

Written Ministerial Statement

Reforming Young People's Education

The Secretary of State for Education (Michael Gove MP):

We need to reform the education system for young people aged over 16, particularly for students who want to pursue vocational courses. Around 1.6 million 16 to 19 year olds are in education each year, but as Professor Alison Wolf stated in her review of vocational education, as many as 350,000 are on courses which do not benefit them.

This year's annual skills survey from the CBI found that more than two-fifths of employers were not satisfied with the basic literacy of school and college leavers, and more than a third were unhappy with levels of numeracy. Reform is vital if we are to ensure that all young people are given the best chance of getting good jobs, succeeding in life and continuing their education.

To ensure a better experience for all young people a number of changes need to take place. One of the principal barriers to improving vocational education has been the system for funding education for young people aged over 16. At present schools and colleges are funded per qualification and so the more qualifications students take and pass, the more money schools and colleges receive. This means that the most rational course of action for schools and colleges is to enter students for easier qualifications – whether vocational or academic. Furthermore, the funding system is not geared towards activity that does not lead to qualifications, such as work experience, even though evidence shows its high value in securing future employment.

We are therefore introducing reforms to programmes of study and funding so that schools and colleges are freed to improve vocational education. Rather than funding per qualification, we will fund institutions 'per student' allowing

sufficient income for each student to undertake a full programme of study, whether vocational or academic.

As a result of these changes, every 16 to 19 year old will have the opportunity to undertake high quality study which will help students move on to skilled work or further or higher education. Young people will be able to take up valuable work experience opportunities. Students without a good pass at 16 in English and maths – the subjects most valued by employers – will have to continue to study those subjects to age 18. We will publish data for each institution showing whether students progressed into work and further or higher education. This will enable students and their parents to make informed choices about programmes of study and institutions. It will also encourage schools and colleges to offer the courses and qualifications employers and Higher Education Institutions value.

Young parents in particular can face barriers to participating in post-16 education and so I am today also publishing the results of the consultation on the Care to Learn Childcare Support scheme. This confirms that we will continue the scheme in its current form and the support it offers to this group of young people.

We are committed to raising the age of compulsory participation in education or training to 17 in 2013 and 18 in 2015. Young people will either study full or part-time at a school or college, or be in work but released for training opportunities. The Government wants to do all we can to support employers who want to hire young people. We are today making a separate statement which explains why we have decided not to commence the duties placed on employers by the Raising the Participation Age legislation in 2013. The Government has decided that we must not at this point put in place barriers that may deter employers from employing young people.

I realise that these changes may cause concern for institutions which offer a primarily academic programme of study. I very much value the commitment of schools, colleges and students to achieving academic excellence and entry to

top universities. To protect institutions while discussions about academic qualifications take place, I am guaranteeing that no institution will see its funding per student fall as a result of these changes for at least three years.

I am establishing a Ministerial working group to assist us in ensuring that these reforms work in the best interests of all young people. I will be inviting representatives from Further Education Colleges, Sixth Form Colleges, schools (including grammar schools) and other providers of post-16 education to consider the best way to implement the reforms to the programmes of study and associated funding changes.

Taken together, the reforms I am announcing today will set us on a clear path to giving young people greater choice and higher quality provision. It will mean that, whatever their ambitions or aspirations, they will reach adulthood with the rigorous qualifications, experience and skills that higher education and employers require.

Copies of the documents we are publishing today will be placed in the House libraries.