‘Raising standards and narrowing gaps are the central goals of the government’s education policy’

Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Education, 8 November 2010.

‘Education reform is the great progressive cause of our times. It is only through reforming education that we can allow every child the chance to take their full and equal share in citizenship, shaping their own destiny, and becoming masters of their own fate.’

Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Education, November 2010.

Introduction

Welcome to the DfE’s Single Equality Scheme (SES).

This government is committed to narrowing gaps, and to tackling the barriers to equal opportunities and social mobility which hold individuals back, and bring heavy social and economic costs. Equality is central to building a strong economy and fairer society. It underpins the Coalition’s guiding principles of freedom, fairness and responsibility.

The government believes that we need to reform education to tackle educational inequality, which has widened in recent years. We believe that too many children are held back by disadvantage and discrimination. We want to build a fair society where social mobility is unlocked; where everyone, regardless of background, has the chance to succeed. We welcome the fact that the Equality Act gives us all an opportunity to do this in a more streamlined and effective way.

This scheme looks forward to implementation of the new public duties to promote equality, as set out in the Equality Act, and outlines some of the ways in which we are going to tackle inequality and promote equality, to raise standards and narrow gaps. It includes an action plan outlining what we intend to do between now and April 2012 to bring to life our equality priorities, including information about how we are monitoring our progress against that action plan.

The document summarises how we have involved and consulted people within and beyond DfE. It also gives details of our arrangements for showing how the impact on equality of our work is being taken into account, and information on our arrangements for publishing the results of the assessments that we make.

This scheme is the final one which DfE will publish before the relevant parts of
the new Equality Act come into force on 4 April 2011 and April 2012. It replaces the three year scheme published on 1 December 2007 which was most recently updated in December 2009. It is, essentially, an interim document and is intended to cover a relatively short time frame. It is published under the equality law in force in December 2010, and covers DfE’s priorities for equality until April 2012.

Under the new Equality Act, on or before 4 April 2012 we shall, as required by law, publish the new, measurable and outcome-focused objectives which will guide DfE’s work to foster fairness and to promote equality from April 2012 to April 2016. During Spring 2011 we shall also publish the data on equality that will inform how we choose our priorities and objectives.

The links between education and equality

‘Throughout history, most individuals have been the victims of forces beyond their control. Where you were born, both geographically and in class terms, was overwhelmingly likely to dictate your future. Jobs were rarely a matter of choice and normally decreed by who your father was. Opportunities for women outside the home were restricted. Wealth governed access to cultural riches. Horizons were narrow, hopes limited, happiness a matter of time and chance.

But education provides a route to liberation from these imposed constraints. Education allows individuals to choose a fulfilling job, to shape the society around them, to enrich their inner life. It allows us all to become authors of our own life stories.’

*Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Education, November 2010.*

Education makes a difference to people’s lives. It has a significant impact on social mobility and on enhancing equality of opportunity.

So there is a sense in which everything we do, including all the things we do for our own staff, is about fairness, and can be used to promote equality.

**Our priorities**

‘Our schools should be engines of social mobility, helping children to overcome the accidents of birth and background to achieve much more than they may ever have imagined.’

*Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Education, November 2010.*

We want this scheme, and the equality priorities and DfE objectives that we shall publish in April 2012, to be the sort of document that people will pick up
and use, and use to make differences in children’s education.

So we have decided to focus in this short document upon the top equality priorities. That doesn’t mean that we shall stop doing other things, or stop using other means to promote equality. But what you will find here are our top priorities for action - the areas where we can make the biggest differences, most quickly, to the most lives. We shall report each year on how well we are doing, and we’d like you to measure us against our progress in these areas above all.

The priorities that follow in the action plan below have not been set by DfE acting alone. We have drawn on documents already published, such as the new cross government Equality Strategy, the EHRC Triennial Review report, ‘How Fair is Britain?’, and the Coalition statement on LGBT equality, ‘Working for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Equality’. We have also drawn on consultation with, and involvement of, people in the equality communities and in our sector. You can find out more about this in the section headed ‘Listening to other people’.

It has not been possible to be specific about what we’ll do on every priority, so more will be added between now and April 2012. For example, ‘The Importance of Teaching’, a White Paper on schools, was published just a few days before this SES, and the equality priorities that emerge from that White Paper and responses to it will be important. Also we are determined to raise the achievement and wellbeing of children with special educational needs (SEN) and disabled children. The forthcoming Green Paper on Special Educational Needs and Disability will consider how we can achieve better educational outcomes and life chances for disabled children and young people and those with SEN - from the early years through to the transition into adult life and employment. The Green Paper will seek to transform the system. It will explore issues such as school choice, early identification, streamlined assessment, and service centred round the needs of the family and child in order to make life better for children with SEN and their parents.

How will we know if we are succeeding?

In this SES we have not gone into detail about the evidence on which we have based our choice of priorities, nor yet against which we will judge success. We are also developing our information strategy. There is, though, a richness of published detail available within DfE statistical first releases, and associated with the DfE business plan. Also, of course, we shall publish a significant range of equality data during Spring 2011, while bearing in mind the need to minimise burdens on schools, and link that to this document, so it will be easy for you to track our progress.

So what are we going to do?

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>What are we going to do?</th>
<th>How will we know if we</th>
<th>Who leads this work,</th>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Many of these can also be found in the cross government Equality Strategy.</strong></th>
<th><strong>are succeeding?</strong></th>
<th><strong>including on monitoring progress?</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Consider ways to build on transparency on our priorities and action to foster fairness and promote equality</strong></td>
<td>Publish the data that has helped us to choose our priorities for action, and that will enable people to monitor our progress. We will work to make it easier to locate, analyse and interpret our data. We aim to reduce the data collection burdens on our providers and to make better use of the data we do collect through better data linkage.</td>
<td><strong>Timeliness of publication and feedback on whether or not this is the most useful data</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Ensure that our work to follow up on our Spending Review settlement is, in the context of overall savings and efficiencies, as fair as possible</strong></td>
<td>Analyse post SR activity and identify the potential for fostering fairness</td>
<td><strong>The evidence that emerges from analysis of results against next steps</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Reduce the disproportionate exclusion of African-Caribbean boys</strong></td>
<td>School leaders will have the freedom to innovate, the powers to maintain discipline fairly and will be encouraged to share with other schools what they have learned in addressing the causes of inequality. We are researching whether new approaches to exclusion and the commissioning of alternative provision improve the treatment of groups that are disproportionately excluded at present.</td>
<td><strong>Reduction in the disproportionate exclusion of African-Caribbean boys</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Empower schools to tackle all forms of bullying</strong></td>
<td>Work with anti-bullying organisations to support schools in tackling all forms of bullying, including homophobic and</td>
<td><strong>Evidence from analysis of future</strong></td>
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<td>particularly homophobic and transphobic bullying</td>
<td>transphobic bullying. We will reinforce this through our streamlined guidance on bullying and have included action to tackle bullying in the November 2010 Schools White paper. Produce slimmed down guidance to schools. Clarify the powers of teachers to tackle bad behaviour including bullying in and out of schools. Give teachers a range of powers to enforce discipline in schools. Working with Ofsted to ensure schools are held to account on how the tackle all forms of bullying. Work with governing bodies of different sports to tackle homophobia and transphobia in sport. Publish research on how to prevent and respond to bullying of disabled children and children with SEN.</td>
<td>inspection reports (once framework is agreed) to see how well schools are doing in tackling bullying</td>
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<td>Raise the attainment of children and young people from the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities</td>
<td>Contribute to the new Ministerial Working Group which is leading action across government to tackle the wide range of inequalities and poor social outcomes experienced by Gypsies and Travellers. Forty eight Local Authorities are offering targeted support to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils.</td>
<td>Raised attainment of children and young people from the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities</td>
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<td>Raise the attainment of disabled children and young people</td>
<td>We are establishing an Education Endowment Fund (the EEF), focused on raising the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in underperforming schools. Many children with identified Special Educational Needs (SEN) experience socio-economic disadvantage. EEF will prioritise children who attract the pupil</td>
<td>Better attainment for disabled children and young people</td>
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<td><strong>Raise the attainment of children and young people from those communities currently under-attaining</strong></td>
<td>Pupil premium additional funding is intended to help schools raise attainment and improve outcomes for their disadvantaged pupils, including those from minority ethnic communities and other groups that are typically over-represented among disadvantaged pupils. We are establishing an Education Endowment Fund (the EEF), focused on raising the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in underperforming schools. Many children from certain minority ethnic communities experience socio-economic disadvantage. EEF will prioritise children who attract the pupil premium but will also allow flexibility for funded activities to include other disadvantaged groups (eg pupils from certain communities) where it is clear that the research would have benefits for disadvantaged pupils.</td>
<td>Better attainment for children and young people from those communities currently under-attaining</td>
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<td><strong>Increasing proportions of under-represented groups at Senior Civil Service level and grades immediately</strong></td>
<td>Ensure that internal systems for assessing and managing behaviours, talent and performance, as well as the Learning and Development offer, are designed to respond to individuals' needs and to issues seen to be affecting equality in DfE</td>
<td>Data collected through our RM MI systems. Also the annual staff survey including</td>
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| Help schools to prepare for implementation of the Equality Act | Publish brief summary legal guidance on our website  
Hold events for the sector to share peer support | Feedback from schools | Equality Law Team and Equality Mainstreaming Team |
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<td>Prepare DfE for implementation of the Equality Act</td>
<td>Hold training sessions for colleagues and post advice on the Making Policy website</td>
<td>The quality of what we publish in April 2011 and April 2012 and the extent to which colleagues’ equality impact assessment helps to develop policy</td>
<td>Equality Law Team and Equality Mainstreaming Team. People and Change</td>
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Listening to other people.

The priorities in the action plan above are designed to narrow gaps and raise standards. We believe that these two things do, and should, go together. And we know that very many of the people who work in our sector, as well as the parents of the children in our schools, believe this too.

During the year since the department’s last updated Single Equality Scheme was published we have listened carefully and often to the views of our partners who work in education. We have involved disabled people, and women and men from minority ethnic communities, in these discussions, not because the law requires us to do so – though it does – but because it is vital that people who are particularly affected by disadvantage and discrimination should help to shape what we do too.

We have attended events organised by other government departments and by the voluntary and civil society sector, and talked with head teachers, staff and parents, in order to hear the voices of interested parties, and we have held our own listening events.

Many colleagues from the voluntary and civil society sector, a range of schools, and between a half and a third of all local authorities were represented at the department’s listening events during 2010. Colleagues attending events were offered lists of possible priorities and invited to discuss these in small groups, and identify their most significant areas for action. The priorities in the DfE action plan above overlap in significant ways with the priorities identified by the people whom we have involved in all these discussions.

For the disability Green Paper we have carried out an open ‘call for views’ exercise and have engaged directly with disabled children, young people and parents of disabled children as part of the Green Paper consultation process.

We have also drawn on a wide range of published evidence in identifying priorities. This evidence can be found in the EHRC Triennial Review report, ‘How Fair is Britain?’ and in the following data and research links on the DfE website.

What do you think?

We should really welcome your ideas about this Single Equality Scheme and especially about the priorities we have chosen. Do, please, write to us at mailbox.edu@education.gsi.gov.uk and tell us what you think.
How do we know if we are getting our policy making right?

Our arrangements for working out how the impact on equality of our work is being taken into account are set out in our Equality Impact Assessment workbook. We provide staff with a consistent format and set of advice for analysing the impact of what we do on equality, and we provide links to a rich range of relevant evidence to help them to assess that impact.

How do we let you know whether we are getting it right?

These are our arrangements for publishing the results of the assessments that we make. We publish the results of our assessments of significant policy developments – Green Papers, White Papers, Bills and so on – on the same web page as this SES.

You can also use the Department’s published statistical information to see what progress we are making.