

NCSL Andrew Adonis Speech

New Heads Conference

Can I first congratulate all of you on becoming headteachers. There may be some of you wondering if you have done the right thing, and harbouring midnight thoughts as to whether you are really up to it. If it's any consolation, ministers lie awake at night with the same worries. We would all be super-human if we had no doubts about facing our manifold responsibilities.

When I became a minister two years ago and was introduced to the House of Lords for the first time, a fellow lord muttered sotto voce – but it ricocheted around the chamber – “My God, it's child labour”. In the House of Lords, anything below 69 counts as comparative youth and inexperience. So if there's no hope for me, there's no hope for any of you either.

But someone has to run our schools, and indeed the education department, and that task has fallen to us collectively.

As CS Lewis put it: “It may be hard for an egg to turn into

a bird: it would be a jolly sight harder for it to learn to fly while remaining an egg...We must be hatched or go bad.”

So now that we are all newly hatched, and blinking in the sunlight, what is our mission? It is very simple to state, but very challenging to achieve. What we want in education boils down to three things:

- That every school should be a good school
- That every child should be able to fulfil their potential
- And that, no child should be written off, or left behind

In a recent speech the Prime Minister’s spelt this out when he said he wants 'no child left out': an education system which works for 100 per cent of the pupils, 100 per cent of the time: a major undertaking for this generation.

If we look at this historically, it is a huge shift in expectations. A generation ago we had what I call a 20% education system. The top 20 per cent or so of teenagers gained good school leaving qualifications, with fewer than one in ten going on to higher education; the other 80 per cent left school with only a basic education and few qualifications, including a tail of more than one in ten embarking on adult life without even basic competence in

literacy and numeracy.

The social and economic imperative of the next two decades – to boost social mobility – is to switch these proportions and create an education system where 80 per cent and more succeed.

Currently we are somewhere above 50%, measured by good GCSE performance. But I – and I believe you too – have a profound belief in our capacity to raise this proportion significantly if we can bring together new investment, better teaching, better facilities, and better aspirations among students and parents as well as teachers.

I am an optimist because the facts are encouraging. The proportion of good schools is increasing. Ofsted's last annual report said: "The general picture for schools is an encouraging one, 14% were judged outstanding, up from 11% last year, whilst the proportion of poor schools is falling. The proportion judged inadequate fell from 8% to 6% and the proportion of inadequate secondary schools has fallen from 13% to 10%".

Ofsted also says that the current generation of teachers is the best trained ever, and standards in schools now reflect this.

For the government's part, our responsibilities are to give you the tools for the job, and that is what we are seeking to do. Capital spending on schools is now running at £66 billion a year, ten times more than a decade ago, and revenue spending has doubled. We carried through our reforms help you – not least the creation of a National College for School Leadership, under its excellent director Steve Munby, without whom we wouldn't be here today.

But we all accept that we have more to do. Whenever I am gathered together with three or more headteachers, the words “red tape” are not far behind; my consultants try to bear down on unnecessary regulations and any examples you want to give to me today I will readily examine – but I would simply say it is often difficult to get the right balance right between appropriate guidance and unnecessary red tape and we need consultants to work with you to get the balance right, area by area.

But there are other crucial areas where I know there will be no differences between us. Looked after children is

one. The educational performance of England's looked after children is a crying shame, and though of course many of the reasons for this go way beyond the school, we want to improve their lot in school too. Hence the legislation in the Queen's speech to improve the stability of school placements for looked after children, particularly in years 10 and 11, and the support which schools are able to give to looked after children.

Another key priority is to encourage more young people to stay in worthwhile education and workplace training until the age of 18. Young people who leave education and training at 16 are disproportionately from poor families. Less than half of those with no qualifications are in work compared with nearly 90% of those with graduate level qualifications. So raising the education participation age in stages from 2013 to 2015 is about social justice, provided of course that the right building blocks are in place to make a success of this.

Let me say a few words about school leadership itself. The expected turnover in school leadership in the next 3-5 years provides an unprecedented opportunity for innovation and reform.

Effective leadership is vital, if we are to achieve a world-class education system, with every school a good school, and every pupil achieving.

Steve's slides contained a lot of excellent advice, and as a minister I am not for a moment going to tell you that I know better how to do your job.

However, if we can help by improving the environment within which you work, we are ready to do this. For example, schools are increasing complex organisations with financial, human resources, facilities management to deal with, not to mention the greater responsibility for joining up and working with other agencies social workers to SENCOSs, from the police to politicians.

It is not realistic to expect you to manage this on your own – and we are looking to see how we can improve your training and support for other professionals on whom you rely.

We have therefore been discussing with NCSL, their advice that Advanced School Business Managers and School Business Directors can help reduce headteachers' workload, and let you get on with your essential business

of being leaders of teaching and learning.

The McKinsey and Michael Barber research NCSL commissioned, on the impact of advanced School Business Managers in schools, found that they free up around 1/3 of Heads' time and 5% of the resources of each school are saved and can be reinvested in teaching and learning.

Advanced School Business Managers and School Business Directors are new roles that introduce highly skilled business management personnel into leadership teams.

They have the potential to relieve Head teachers of administrative burdens and enable them to focus on leading teaching and learning in their schools and support and develop their staff.

The Advanced School Business Manager could work across small groups of primary schools – a federation, cluster of two or three schools or a single large school.

The higher level School Business Director position would operate in larger groups of schools such as federations, trusts and other formal partnerships, providing strategic business leadership.

School Business Managers could also support schools to run their finances even more effectively, achieving economy of scale by buying in bulk, building business contacts to draw in investment, and using their experience to help schools be prudent in their budgets and plan for the long-term. This in turn will help every pupil get the opportunities they deserve and free up money to be reinvested in the education system.

NCSL, working with my department and local authorities, will establish 24 demonstration projects across the country starting early next year to pilot the new roles.

I am also pleased that the College is working collaboratively with Business in the Community to deliver two demonstration projects - helping to build effective, sustainable partnerships between schools and businesses and bringing in the skills of business professionals. Secondments involving volunteers from BitC's member companies, N.M Rothschilds and Sons and Merrill Lynch

will be joining the senior leadership teams of large comprehensive schools in Barking and Dagenham and Tower Hamlets as part of this first group of projects.

In Sheffield 5 primary, 1 secondary and a special school will be working collaboratively across both phases to develop further models of leadership and governance between the schools.

And in West Sussex the project will be looking at how shared leadership and new governance arrangements can help support small rural schools facing a challenging future with falling rolls. Exploring shared business management capacity in this context will be key to supporting the emergence of new ways of working.

Can I make one final point. Leadership succession research indicates that unplanned head teacher succession is one of the most common sources of schools' failure to progress.

Current head teachers play a crucial role in developing their colleagues' ambition; with four fifths (81%) of teachers saying that they have been inspired by the leader at their own school.

I hope, therefore, that as you embark on your own journey as a school leader, you will keep an eye out for others who could join you, now or later. And you can reassure them that they don't need to be 44 let alone 69, to make the grade.