



Rt Hon Ed Balls MP
Secretary of State

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15/2

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RESPONSE TO ADVICE ON PRIMARY LEADERSHIP

Dear *Steve*

Thank you for your advice of 10 August on primary leadership.

I agree that leadership in primary schools is a challenging and complex area and I recognise that there are no straightforward solutions or easy answers. Your advice is the first step towards developing a more innovative strategy for primary leadership.

I endorse your ideas to develop and trial the roles of School Business Managers and Directors, as I believe these roles have the potential to contribute to stronger and more strategic leadership, as well as help to build a culture of value for money in our schools. The costs for this should be met from your current 2007-08 budget and I would like the trials to take place in City Challenge areas and a rural area. Please work closely with my officials to ensure that this dovetails with the wider work of my Department on efficiency and value for money. I look forward to seeing the results of the pilot before making a decision on wider roll-out.

I would like you to continue to work out the detail of the different models of leadership which will feed into STRB evidence. I am minded not to make it a requirement for local authorities to consider remodelling leadership when a head teacher vacancy arises because this will impose an unreasonable burden on local authorities. I agree the importance of local authorities and governors considering remodelling leadership, but I think that making it a requirement is a blunt instrument which could lead to perverse incentives. You should use the Succession Planning initiative to support local authorities and schools to take a more strategic view of remodelling leadership.

We should do more to encourage our outstanding leaders to better support less effective schools, so I agree in principle to your proposal that we target schools which Ofsted rate as having satisfactory leadership. I would like you to work with my officials to develop criteria to identify the schools where we could make the most impact and to work up the costs to support this, which will be subject to affordability.

We need to do more to help closer collaboration of schools and ECM organisations as this could lead to more joined up and better quality services. You made a number of recommendations around initially funding joint subject, extended services coordinator and family support advisor posts which I have considered. I think that the principle of joint subject posts is sound but only sustainable within the context of joint governance. I would like you work with officials and in partnership with the Director of the National Primary Strategy to develop the detail and work out the funding to support these proposals, which again will be subject to affordability. Please provide me with more details about the joint ECM posts and the funding to support them.

Federations and trust schools are a good way of tackling some of the issues with primary leadership and governance but we need to look at the best way of encouraging schools and local authorities to consider these options through a combination of levers, incentives and promotion. Please work with my officials in Trust Schools and Federations to develop more specific recommendations and a strategy for using these options to help with primary leadership, building on existing pathfinders and case studies.

You made a recommendation to develop training for new chairs of governors and you should be aware that officials in School Governance are undertaking a review of the whole area which I would like you to be more involved with. As part of your contribution to the review of governance I would like you to identify ways in which we could incentivise higher take-up of the current training provision for governors and whether or not we need a different kind of course. Again, please work with my officials to take this forward.

Although not mentioned in your advice, I am keen to explore the potential for extending Future Leaders into primary schools which could make a strong difference. So I welcome the fact that we are about to commission an independent evaluation of the Future Leaders Programme to assess its wider impact and consider the future of the programme – one of the things the evaluation will consider is the potential to expand the programme to include primary schools.

If we are to make significant progress in primary school leadership, there is clearly much to do. I believe that by all working together, we can achieve success. I appreciate the work which you have done and hope that you will work closely with my officials to develop the solutions to enable primary leadership to raise outcomes for children and young people. I wish you and everyone at the College a successful new academic year.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ed Balls', with a stylized flourish at the end.

ED BALLS MP