

UK

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National context

Population, economic and social characteristics

Education in the United Kingdom is a devolved matter, with each country having a separate education system.

Whilst education in England is the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Education, the day-to-day administration and funding of state schools is the responsibility of local authorities. Universally free of charge state education was introduced piecemeal between 1870 and 1944. Education is now mandatory from ages five to sixteen (15 if born in late July or August). In 2011, the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) rated 13–14 year old pupils in England and Wales 10th in the world for maths and 9th for science. The majority of children are educated in state-sector schools, a small proportion of which select on the grounds of academic ability. Two of the top ten performing schools in terms of GCSE results in 2006 were state-run grammar schools. Over half of students at the leading universities of Cambridge and Oxford had attended state schools. Despite a fall in actual numbers the proportion of children in England attending private schools has risen to over 7%. In 2010, more than 45% of places at the University of Oxford and 40% at the University of Cambridge were taken by students from private schools, even though they educate just 7% of the population. The universities of England are among some of the top universities in the world; the University of Cambridge, the University of Oxford, the University College London and Imperial College London are all ranked in the global top 10 in the 2010 QS World University Rankings, with Cambridge ranked first.

Education in Scotland is the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, with day-to-day administration and funding of state schools the responsibility of Local Authorities. Two non-departmental public bodies have key roles in Scottish education. The Scottish Qualifications Authority is responsible for the development, accreditation, assessment and certification of qualifications other than degrees which are delivered at secondary schools, post-secondary colleges of further education and other centres. The Learning and Teaching Scotland provides advice, resources and staff development to education professionals. Scotland first legislated for compulsory education in 1496. The proportion of children in Scotland attending private schools is just over 4%, and it has been rising slowly in recent years. Scottish students who attend Scottish universities pay neither tuition fees nor graduate endowment charges, as fees were abolished in 2001 and the

graduate endowment scheme was abolished in 2008. The universities of Scotland are among some of the top universities in the world; the University of Edinburgh, the University of Glasgow and the University of St Andrews are all ranked in the global top 100 in the 2012 QS World University Rankings, with Edinburgh ranked 21st.

The Welsh Government has responsibility for education in Wales. A significant number of Welsh students are taught either wholly or largely in the Welsh language; lessons in Welsh are compulsory for all until the age of 16. There are plans to increase the provision of Welsh-medium schools as part of the policy of creating a fully bilingual Wales.

Education in Northern Ireland is the responsibility of the Minister of Education and the Minister for Employment and Learning, although responsibility at a local level is administered by five education and library boards covering different geographical areas. The Council for the Curriculum, Examinations & Assessment (CCEA) is the body responsible for advising the government on what should be taught in Northern Ireland's schools, monitoring standards and awarding qualifications.

Description of the types of education and training (formal and informal) that occur in a country

Education is compulsory between the ages of 5 and 16 years. The great majority of young people continue with full-time education after the age of 16. The Government is committed to raising the participation age in England to 17 in 2013 and 18 in 2015, so that all 16 and 17 year-olds participate in education or training. Many post-compulsory secondary programmes are of two years' duration, i.e. for 16- to 18-year-olds however the funding framework applies to 16- to 19-year-olds and for this reason the age bracket 16–18/19 is adopted throughout this description.

Publicly-funded schools comprise maintained schools, funded through the local authority, and academies, which are legally independent schools but are funded directly from central government. All publicly-funded schools enjoy a high level of autonomy and are responsible for their own budgets and staffing decisions. All education institutions have a governing body, responsible for the general direction of the institution, which includes representatives from a range of stakeholders. Strategic and financial planning at school level is shared between the school governing body and headteacher, whilst the day to day management of schools is the responsibility of the headteacher. Decentralisation and autonomy in the education system is balanced by a high degree of accountability, including the publication of performance and inspection data. Schools are responsible for planning the whole curriculum experienced by pupils, taking into account the school's particular needs and circumstances. This must be a balanced and broadly based curriculum which promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society, and prepares pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life. Maintained schools must by law include the National Curriculum and religious education in the whole curriculum. Although academies are not required by law to follow the National Curriculum, under the terms of their funding agreements they must teach English, mathematics and science and religious education. Teaching hours for particular subjects are not centrally prescribed. Grade repetition is not a feature of the school system. 14–16 secondary education leads to combinations of single subject qualifications, provided by external awarding organisations within a qualifications system common to England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

16–19 secondary education is characterised by subject specialisation and a range of providers: sixth forms in secondary schools (11 to 18/19), sixth-form colleges (16 to 19) or further education colleges (16+). The landscape of providers varies according to local arrangements but all areas provide young people with a wide choice of programmes leading to general/academic, pre-vocational or vocational qualifications. Qualifications are provided by centrally regulated awarding organisations, external to the school or college within a qualifications system common to England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Higher education institutions (HEIs) are diverse, ranging widely in size, mission and history. HEIs are private bodies which are independent of government. They receive their income from a number of sources, including from student fees, through research projects and by generating business. However, they also receive a portion of their income from public funds. The structure of programmes is not regulated by law. Institutions are free to design their own programmes and awards and to determine the conditions on which they awarded, subject to the status of their degree-awarding powers. However, all institutions structure their programmes along broadly similar lines within a three cycle framework, which conforms to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) qualifications framework.

Pre-school Education

Introduced in 2008, the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) covers children from birth to age five in what may be known as ‘early years’, ‘nursery’, ‘pre-school’ or ‘pre-primary’ education. Maintained provision for children aged three and over usually takes the form of nursery schools, or nursery classes and reception classes (for four- to five-year-olds) within primary schools. Nursery school places are also provided in children’s centres, which offer integrated early years education, childcare and related family support and health services. The EYFS replaced the foundation stage for three- to five-year-olds, introduced by the Education Act 2002, as a statutory part of the National Curriculum, and also includes the previous ‘Birth to Three Matters’ framework. Provision for children aged three to five years within in EYFS is counted as ISCED 0.

Following an extensive review of early years provision (Tickell, 2011), a revised and slimmed down Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE, 2012) came into force on 1 September 2012, replacing the original 2008 framework.

Compulsory Education and Participation

Education is compulsory from age 5 to age 16, however the participation age is rising to 18. The Education and Skills Act 2008 introduced the requirement for all young people to participate in education or training until they are 18. The participation age is being raised in stages: to 17 from 2013 and to 18 from 2015. The first cohort to be affected began secondary education (Year 7, age 11) in September 2008 and is currently in Year 11 in the 2012/13 school year. This cohort must continue education or training until at least the end of the school year in which they turn 17. All subsequent cohorts will have to continue until at least their 18th birthday. This does not mean that young people have to stay in school but they must pursue one of the following post-16:

- full-time education, such as school, college or home education
- an apprenticeship
- part-time education or training if they are employed, self-employed or volunteering full-time (which is defined as 20 hours or more a week).

In accordance with the Education Act 2002 and earlier legislation, the period of compulsory education is divided into four key stages:

- key stage 1 for pupils aged 5 to 7 (ISCED 1)
- key stage 2 for pupils aged 7 to 11 (ISCED 1)
- key stage 3 for pupils aged 11 to 14 (ISCED 2)
- key stage 4 for pupils aged 14 to 16 (ISCED 3).

Pupils transfer from primary to secondary school at age 11. The vast majority of secondary schools in England accept pupils from the full ability range. These are known as comprehensive schools. Some secondary schools cater for pupils up to the age of 16 only, others for pupils up to the age of 18/19. In some areas of England, pupils transfer at age 8 or 9 from a first school to a middle school, and subsequently to a secondary school (often known as a high school or upper school) at age 12 or 13. All such schools are legally categorised as either a primary or a secondary school, and all follow the same National Curriculum key stages as other schools.

Post-16 Participation

At age 16, the majority of pupils continue their studies, either at school, in a sixth-form college, or at a further education institution – and from 2013, all young people must continue to participate in education and training until age 17, rising to 18 in 2015 (see the subheading ‘Compulsory Education and Participation’ above). It is currently more common for pupils wishing to undertake vocational education to transfer to a further education institution, although most schools offer a limited range of vocational courses. Most further education institutions offer both vocational and general academic courses.

Practices and organisations

Central government has overall responsibility for the education system in England but responsibility for the provision of education is decentralised, lying with local authorities, voluntary providers including churches, the governing bodies of educational institutions and the teaching profession.

Overall responsibility for the education service lies with the Department for Education (DfE) and with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). DfE responsibilities include planning and monitoring the education service in schools and early year’s settings, ensuring the provision of integrated services for children, and bringing together policy relating to children and young people. BIS is responsible for science and innovation, skills, further and higher education and enterprise.

The Education Funding Agency (EFA) is involved in the funding of education and training in schools and colleges up to age 19. It directly funds academies (public-sector independent schools) and passes funding to local authorities for maintained schools. The Skills Funding Agency (SFA) is responsible for funding and commissioning post-19 education and training. The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) is responsible for funding in higher education. The direct costs of specific research projects are funded by the UK Research Councils which have a remit across the UK.

Ofsted, the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills, is responsible for the inspection and regulation of day care and children's social care, and the inspection of children's services, schools, colleges, initial teacher training, youth work, work-based learning and adult education. At higher education level, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) provides quality assurance services across the UK. It is independent of UK governments and is owned by the organisations that represent the heads of UK higher education institutions.

Local authorities have a duty to secure sufficient suitable education and training opportunities to meet the reasonable needs of all young people in their area. The three core responsibilities of the local authority in education are to ensure a sufficient supply of school places; to tackle underperformance in schools and ensuring high standards; and to support vulnerable children and young people.

Policy environment

Key Stakeholders involved in Lifelong Learning

A range of government and non-government organisations are involved in the coordination of lifelong learning. These include:

- The Department for Education (DfE) and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS).
- The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Skills (shared between DfE and BIS) whose portfolio includes further education, apprenticeships, adult skills, lifelong learning and informal adult learning.
- The Skills Funding Agency (SFA), a partner organisation of BIS, which funds and promotes adult further education and skills training.
- Ofsted, the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills, which inspects and regulates education and skills provision for learners of all ages.
- The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) which aims to encourage all adults to engage in learning of all kinds.
- The National Careers Service which provides information, advice and guidance on learning, training and work opportunities as well as access to 'Lifelong Learning Accounts' – online accounts where individuals can store information relating to their career development.

Although the United Kingdom has no written national constitution setting out the fundamental principles from which the rights and responsibilities of citizens are derived, the Human Rights Act 1998 incorporated into law nearly all the rights contained in the European Convention on Human Rights, and gives citizens a clear legal statement of their basic rights and fundamental freedoms. The Act became fully operational in October 2000. With regard to education, under the Act, no person shall be denied a right to an education. In the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions. This does not require the Government to provide or subsidise any specific type of education. Although parents have a right to ensure their religious or philosophical beliefs are respected during their children's education, this is

not an absolute right. So long as these beliefs are properly considered, an education authority can depart from them but only if there are good reasons for doing so and it is done in an objective, critical and pluralistic way.

Public bodies, including education authorities and individual education institutions at all phases, are also bound by a framework of equality legislation that operates across a number of social categories, including gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, race, and religion and belief. This legislation applies to their role as education providers and also to their role as employers. There is also a body of employment legislation which education authorities and institutions must comply with in their role as employers. Schools

A fundamental principle of compulsory education is set out in section 7 of the Education Act 1996, which places the responsibility for a child's education on his/her parents: 'The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable

- to his age, ability and aptitude, and
- to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.'

For the majority of children, this means education by attendance at a maintained school. Section 78 of the Education Act 2002 sets out the general requirements for the curriculum for a maintained school which must be: 'a balanced and broadly based curriculum which

- promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society, and
- prepares pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.'

The Children Act 2004 aimed to maximise opportunities and minimise risks for all children and young people, by integrating children's services and focusing these services more effectively around the needs of children, young people and families. The Act introduced:

- integrated teams of health and education professionals, social workers and advisers based in and around schools and children's centres
- a clear framework of accountability at national and local level, by the appointment of a Director of Children's Services with responsibility for education and social services in every local authority in England
- new Children's Commissioners to act as 'champions for young people'.

The Education Act 2005 provided the legislative framework to support the policy developments set out in A New Relationship with Schools (DfES and Ofsted, 2004) and the Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners (DfES, 2004). The Act aimed to raise standards for all children by promoting greater autonomy and diversity in the education system. Reforms introduced under the Act included changes to the school inspection system which aimed to make it more efficient and effective (see the article on 'Quality Assurance in Early Childhood and School Education'); three-year budgets for all schools based around the academic year; the introduction of the 'School Profile', bringing together key information on a school into one document (this duty was abolished under the Education Act 2011, with effect from 1 February 2012); an extension of the remit of the Teacher Training Agency

(which became the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) and is now the Teaching Agency) and the establishment of a common basis for the inspection of education and day-care services delivered in children's centres and extended schools. The Education and Inspections Act 2006, passed in November 2006, provided the legislative basis to implement the reform proposals set out in the White Paper Higher Standards, Better Schools for All (GB. Parliament. HoC, 2005). Amongst others, it included provisions to:

- introduce better discipline in schools by providing for a new power for teachers and other school staff to discipline pupils; extend the scope of parenting orders and parenting contracts; and require parents to take responsibility for excluded pupils in their first five days of exclusion
- place new duties on local authorities to promote the fulfilment by children of their educational potential, to promote diversity and choice in their provision of schools, to consider representations from parents about school provision in their area, and to identify children not receiving education
- place a duty on governing bodies of certain foundation schools to establish parent councils, and on the governing bodies of all maintained schools to have regard to the views of parents
- introduce a new single inspectorate (in England) for children and learners
- introduce a duty on school governing bodies to promote the well-being of their pupils, to promote community cohesion and to have regard to the Children and Young People's Plan
- ban the practice of interviewing prospective new pupils and/or their parents, and require schools to 'act in accordance with' rather than 'have regard to' the new School Admissions Code
- introduce new nutritional standards for all food and drink supplied on school premises, and for food and drink provided by local authorities or governing bodies at other places.

The Education and Skills Act 2008 introduced the requirement for all young people to participate in education or training until their 18th birthday through either full-time education or training; work-based learning; or part-time education or training. The minimum age at which young people can leave learning will be increased in two stages – to 17 from 2013 and to 18 from 2015. The first cohort to be affected by the changes began secondary education (Year 7, age 11) in September 2008.

The Academies Act 2010 made provision to reform how schools are governed and funded. It allowed for the creation of more academies and enabled all primary, secondary and special schools to convert to academies if they wish.

Academies are publicly funded independent schools which have individual funding agreements directly with the Secretary of State and enjoy freedoms relating to organisation and the curriculum. See the subheading 'Types of Institution' in the article on 'Organisation of General Lower Secondary Education' for further information.

In December 2010, the Department for Education (DfE) published a White Paper for schools which set out plans for whole-system reform. The proposals set out in The Importance of Teaching: the Schools White Paper (DfE, 2010) were legislated for by the Education Act 2011 which received Royal Assent in November 2011. These include:

- School discipline: teachers have been given powers to search pupils for banned items and provided with better protection from false allegations made by pupils. Exclusion appeal panels have been replaced by review panels which will not have the power to force a school to reinstate an excluded pupil.
- The academies programme is being expanded. Secondary academies no longer need to have a curriculum specialism. Two new types of academy have been created: 16 to 19 academies and alternative provision academies. The duty on local authorities (LAs) to provide School Improvement Partners (SIPs) to each of their maintained schools has been removed. Schools are able to buy in this type of support from their own budgets, should they feel it is required.
- Changes have been made to the inspections framework for schools (see the subheading 'Improving the Quality and Efficiency of Education and Training' in the article on 'Education and Training 2020 Strategic Framework').
- Maintained schools may be required to take part in international surveys of school and pupil performance.
- The Secretary of State will be able to direct a local authority to issue a warning notice to a school on grounds of performance or safety concerns, and the Secretary of State's power to close schools will be extended to all schools eligible for intervention, rather than (as at present) only those deemed by Ofsted to be in need of special measures.
- Early years provision (the 'free entitlement', notionally 15 hours a week for 38 weeks a year) will be offered to 2-year-olds from disadvantaged families (see the article on 'Organisation of Programmes for Children over 2–3 Years').
- The Young Peoples Learning Agency (YPLA), the General Teaching Council England (GTCE), the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA), and the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) have been abolished, with their functions being extinguished or transferred – see the article on 'Administration and Governance at Central and/or Regional Level'.

Lifelong Learning Strategy

There is no single definition of lifelong learning in the UK context. It can be understood in a number of ways:

- adults who have left formal education and training and returned at a later date
- learning through all stages of life, that is from birth to death
- learning undertaken by the economically active.

The legal framework refers instead to further education. This is defined in the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 as follows:

- full-time and part-time education suitable to the requirements of persons over compulsory school age (16 years), including vocational, social, physical and recreational training
- organised leisure-time occupation provided in connection with such education.

National Strategies relating to Lifelong Learning

There is no overarching national strategy for lifelong learning. However, the skills strategy set out in Skills for Sustainable Growth (BIS, 2010) and Investing in Skills for Sustainable Growth (BIS, 2010) (both available on the Skills Strategy website) contain some provisions

relevant to lifelong learning. The strategy is based on the principle that: ‘Government funds are limited and we will prioritise funding support for learners with very low levels of skills or the disadvantaged, while there will be an expectation that learners and employers will co-invest alongside Government in meeting the costs of intermediate and higher level training courses from which they will derive private benefits.’ The skills strategy has been taken forward in *New Challenges, New Chances: Further Education and Skills System Reform Plan* (BIS, 2011) in which the Government states that it will fund provision for those who did not achieve basic English and maths in school; young people aged 19 up to 24 to help them to progress; unemployed people on benefits who are looking for work; and those at risk of social exclusion.

Ongoing Reforms and Policy Developments

The article on ‘Education in the Europe 2020 Strategy’ describes policy developments in areas of concern in education and training identified in the Europe 2020 strategy. Europe 2020 is the European Union’s 10-year strategy for ‘smart, sustainable and inclusive growth’. The article on ‘Education and Training 2020 Strategic Framework’ covers initiatives related to the priorities of the Strategic Framework for European cooperation in education and training (‘ET 2020’), adopted by the Council of the European Union in May 2009. The article on ‘Specific Ongoing Reforms and Policy Developments at National Level’ gives information on other recent national policy developments in England.

The UK Government, formed by a coalition of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties, took office on 11 May 2010, following three terms of Labour Government since 1997. On 20 May 2010, the new Government announced its programme for government for the next five years. The programme includes the following priorities for education in England – many of which have since been taken forward:

- enabling parents, charities, community groups and teachers to establish new schools (see the subheading ‘Academies and Free Schools’ in the article ‘Specific Ongoing Reforms and Policy Developments at National Level’)
- giving schools greater freedom in organising and delivering the curriculum (see the subheading ‘2014 National Curriculum’ in the article ‘Specific Ongoing Reforms and Policy Developments at National Level’)
- introducing a ‘Pupil Premium’ to increase spending on pupils from the poorest backgrounds (see the article on ‘Promoting Equity, Social Cohesion and Active Citizenship’)
- reforming pay and conditions rules to give schools greater freedom to reward good teachers and address poor performance (see the subheading ‘Teacher Reforms’ in the article ‘Specific Ongoing Reforms and Policy Developments at National Level’)
- targeting inspections on areas of failure with less frequent inspections for successful education establishments (see the article on ‘Improving the Quality and Efficiency of Education and Training’)
- creating greater flexibility in the examinations system, including the introduction in state schools of the international or iGCSE (taken by 16-year-olds), alongside the qualifications already on offer for this age group
- reforming school league tables so that schools are able to focus on, and demonstrate, the progress of children of all abilities

- giving heads and teachers greater powers to promote good behaviour in the classroom and tackle bullying (see the subheading ‘Education Act 2011’ in the article ‘Specific Ongoing Reforms and Policy Developments at National Level’)
- developing ways of supporting the creation of Apprenticeships, internships, work pairings and college and workplace training places, as part of the wider programme to stimulate employment (see the article ‘Education in the EU2020 Strategy’)
- removing direct state control of further education (FE) colleges and abolishing many non-departmental public bodies involved in the administration of FE
- targeting public funding of the FE sector so that it follows student choice
- supporting the provision of free nursery care for pre-school children by a diverse range of providers (see the subheading ‘Early Childhood Education and Care’ in the article ‘Specific Ongoing Reforms and Policy Developments at National Level’)
- increasing Sure Start’s focus on the neediest families, including through the better involvement of organisations with a track record of supporting families (Sure Start is the government programme which provides integrated services to pre-school children and their families); and investigating ways of ensuring providers are paid in part by the results they achieve.

Education in the Europe 2020 Strategy

Europe 2020 is the European Union’s 10-year strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The strategy identifies a number of key areas which concern the field of education and training: a common headline target with twin targets on early school leaving and higher education participation; country specific recommendations; the Annual Growth Survey under the European semester of economic governance; the question of investment in education; and the agenda for new skills and jobs.

Investment

The Government’s Spending Review, published in October 2010, and fixed budgets up to 2014/15. The Government has prioritised spending that supports growth, such as increasing core funding for schools, expanding adult Apprenticeships and funding world class research. The education settlement supports a comprehensive approach to narrowing the attainment gap and improving social mobility.

The Plan for Growth (HM Treasury and BIS, 2011) is the Government’s plan to achieve sustainable, long-term economic growth. It sets out how conditions for economic growth and recovery will be created, helping to reduce cyclical youth unemployment. The independent Heseltine Review looked at how to increase growth in the economy. Published in October 2012, the Review’s report, No Stone Unturned in Pursuit of Growth, includes several recommendations about education and skills as the ‘foundation for growth and prosperity’. These include: embedding engagement with business deeper into the school curriculum; and that further education colleges should consult and agree their provision with local enterprise partnerships (LEPs) to ensure it reflects local labour market requirements. In its response, the Government accepted the great majority of the recommendations in full or in part.

The Annual Growth Survey

The Annual Growth Survey (AGS) 2013 launches the 2013 European semester of economic governance. It is the basis for building the necessary common understanding about the

priorities for action at national and EU level for the next 12 months, which should then feed into national economic and budgetary decisions.

The 2013 Annual Growth Survey identifies five reform areas in relation to education and training in the European Union. These are to:

- raise the performance of education and training systems and overall skill levels, and link the worlds of work and education more closely together
- reduce early school leaving and facilitate the transition from school to work by developing quality Traineeships, Apprenticeships and dual learning models – classroom-based education combined with hands-on experience in the work place. Efforts to develop entrepreneurial skills are needed to support new business creation and improve employability levels of the young
- develop and implement 'Youth Guarantee' schemes whereby every young person under the age of 25 receives an offer of employment, continued education, an Apprenticeship or a Traineeship within four months of leaving formal education or becoming unemployed. Such schemes can be co-financed by the European Social Fund
- improve access to lifelong learning systems throughout working life, including for older workers, by strengthening partnerships of public and private institutions involved in the provision, application and updating of specific skills
- improve the connection between education and lifelong learning systems and labour market needs. Short-cycle tertiary qualifications of two years, focused on areas where a skills shortage has been identified, as well as targeted mobility schemes, can prove particularly effective in current circumstances.

In April 2013 the Government published Rigour and Responsiveness in Skills (BIS, 2013), a follow up skills strategy to the 2010 strategy Investing in Skills for Sustainable Growth (BIS, 2010). The new strategy takes forward the modernisation of the vocational skills sector with a strong emphasis on courses and qualifications which are rigorous and responsive to the needs of employers. The strategy is set out around the following key themes:

- raising standards by making the system more professional (including the introduction of a new chartered status for further education colleges) and intervening in poor provision
- creating the Traineeships programme to prepare young people for work (these began in August 2013 – see the subheading 'Country Specific Recommendations' above)
- continuing the reform of Apprenticeships with an increased focus on employer input (see below)
- continuing to make qualifications relevant and valued – this is being addressed through reforms following the Wolf Review for qualifications for 14- to 19-year-olds (see the article on 'Specific Ongoing Reforms and Policy Developments at National Level') - and vocational qualifications for adults will now be reviewed and the number reduced
- using funding to make provision more responsive – in the current economic climate available funding must be deployed to the greatest effect
- giving employers and individuals better information to make effective choices.

Building Engagement, Building Futures (BIS, 2011) sets out the Government's strategy to:

- achieve full participation of 16- to 17-year-olds in education and training
- help 18- to 24-year-olds to engage in education and training
- support 18- to 24-year-olds into employment
- support 18- to 24-year-olds on inactive benefits and those in disadvantaged groups.

The rise in the participation age to 17 from 2013 and to 18 from 2015 as well as initiatives such as the Youth Contract and the Traineeships scheme are taking this strategy forward and are explained under the subheading 'Country Specific Recommendations' above. See also the information on 'Early School Leaving' under the subheading 'Headline Targets for Education and Training'.

In *New Challenges, New Chances: Further Education and Skills System Reform Plan* (BIS, 2011), the Government set out its plans to improve Apprenticeships, focusing on where they bring the greatest returns and wider benefits, including targeting younger adults, new employees, higher level qualifications and particular sectors where investment will make the greatest impact. Since April 2011, all Apprenticeship programmes have been required to comply with the Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for England (BIS, DFE and SFA, 2013). An independent review of the future of Apprenticeships in a changing economy – the Richard Review (BIS, 2012) – made recommendations to government in November 2012. These included redefining Apprenticeships, focusing more rigorously on the outcomes of Apprenticeships and offering appropriate government incentives for Apprenticeships. Central to the findings of the Richard Review is that employers should be at the heart of the design and delivery of Apprenticeships. The relationship between the individual apprentice and the employer is key, with the Government's role being to support the employer to meet the required standards. The Government is taking forward the recommendations of the Richard Review through initiatives such as the Employer Ownership Pilot (EOP), which gives employers direct control of public funding for Apprenticeships and enables them to purchase the appropriate training for their business and apprentices. See above for further details of the Apprenticeship reforms as set out in the new skills strategy *Rigour and Responsiveness in Skills* (BIS, 2013).

New Skills for New Jobs

'New Skills for New Jobs' is a European Commission initiative in support of the EU's employment target for 2020: to have 75 per cent of the working-age population (aged 20–64 years) in work. It focuses on:

- promoting better anticipation of future skills needs
- improving the match between skills and labour market needs
- bridging the gap between the worlds of education and work.

The Plan for Growth (HM Treasury and BIS, 2011) is the UK Government's plan to achieve sustainable, long-term economic growth. One of the four ambitions underpinning the plan is the desire 'to create a more educated workforce that is the most flexible in Europe'. One action in this area is to work with key sectors in the economy to ensure that the skills system is delivering what the sector needs. The new skills strategy, *Rigour and Responsiveness in Skills* (BIS, 2013), published in April 2013, takes this forward with a key emphasis on

ensuring that education and training providers have the flexibility to deliver what is really wanted by learners and employers.

Bridging the gap between the worlds of education and work is the focus of many of the initiatives relating to early school leaving and participation such as the Youth Contract and the Traineeships programme. See the subheading 'Country Specific Recommendation' above for more details.

The Government also supports those aged 24+ who want to retrain or up-skill at level 2 in order to secure different employment and/or improve their life chances. For adults aged over 24 who wish to do full level 3 (two A levels or the vocational equivalent) or level 4 (higher vocational education equivalent to ISCED 5B) in order to qualify for a professional job and/or progress to higher education, '24+ advanced learning loans' have been introduced. See the article on the 'National Qualifications Framework' for information on qualification levels. In April 2012, the National Careers Service was launched, building on the former 'Next Step' service. It provides information, advice and guidance on careers, skills and the labour market, covering further education, Apprenticeships and other types of training and higher education. In June 2012, Ofsted (the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) published Skills for Employment, which assessed the efficiency of systems in matching unemployed adults to training provision and the effectiveness of this provision in developing employability skills and supporting progression into sustained employment. The report made recommendations for the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and for training providers. For the former, recommendations included prioritising the provision of work-related English and mathematics, while for the latter they included ensuring that provision makes a difference to participants' chances of sustained employment. A review of business-university collaboration was published in February 2012 (Wilson, 2012). This called for universities to be at the heart of the economy, to promote growth in the UK and to improve the employability of graduates. Recommendations included increasing opportunities for students to acquire relevant work experience, such as sandwich degree programmes, internships and work-based programmes. The review also found that growth in foundation degrees (short first cycle vocational programmes equivalent to ISCED 5B), designed and targeted at students with vocational qualifications, could provide progression routes, whilst meeting the high vocational skills needs of industry. In June 2012, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) published a report which stated that there is a wide consensus across stakeholders on the broad thrust of these recommendations and which set out the next steps for universities, business and government. In June 2013 the initial findings of a review of universities and growth were published. These include ensuring universities play a stronger role in economic development and improving access for small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to universities, including a stronger role for university business schools to provide support to SMEs. The final report will be published later in 2013.

Making Lifelong Learning and Mobility a Reality

Lifelong Learning Strategies

The strategy Skills for Sustainable Growth (BIS, 2010), published in November 2010, set out the Government's reform plans for the further education (FE) and skills system. The strategy aimed to ensure that those who have left school without basic skills in literacy or numeracy will continue to have access to government funded training. It also set out a system of

government-backed loans – the 24+ advanced learning loans – which came into effect in September 2013, to help learners aged 24 and over to finance other intermediate and higher-level qualifications. The new skills strategy Rigour and Responsiveness in Skills (BIS, 2013) takes forward the modernisation of the vocational skills sector – see the subheading ‘Annual Growth Survey’ above for more details. The right to request time away from work to train was introduced in April 2010 for large organisations employing over 250 people, under the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

European Reference Tools

The European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF) is an overarching qualifications framework, a ‘meta-framework’, designed to serve as a translation device to make qualifications more readable and understandable across different countries and systems in Europe. The principal aims of the EQF are to promote citizens’ mobility between countries and to facilitate their lifelong learning. The work to reference the five qualifications frameworks in established use in the UK to the EQF was completed in 2010. Of these five frameworks, three apply to England, Wales and Northern Ireland and together accommodate the majority of qualifications in use in the various sectors of education, training and lifelong learning, including higher education. These are: the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF); the National Qualifications Framework (NQF); and the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications for England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ). The QCF and the NQF contain levels designed to recognise learning achievements below the level normally represented by vocational, pre-vocational or general educational qualifications. These levels have particular significance for lifelong learning, as the recognition they provide for achievements at these levels is an encouragement to learners to take further steps on the qualifications ladder. The structure of the QCF, which was formally introduced in 2008, is also of particular relevance to lifelong learning, as it aims to enable learners to gain qualifications at their own pace along flexible routes by awarding credit for qualifications and units. Further information is available in the Eurypedia article on the ‘National Qualifications Framework’ and from the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual).

A Joint Steering Group on Outward Student Mobility was formed in 2011 to review the obstacles and incentives to outward student mobility in the UK. The group reported to the Universities and Science Minister in May 2012. The report’s principal recommendation was the development of a national strategy for outward mobility supported by a body to facilitate and promote best practice, effectiveness and professionalism in this area. In addition, the Government announced a replacement for the Erasmus fee waiver under which students in England were not charged a tuition fee when taking a year abroad under the Erasmus Scheme. The new support, which takes effect from 2014/15, will allow English higher education (HE) institutions to charge students up to 15 per cent of the maximum fee cap when taking a year abroad. It will apply not just to Erasmus students, but to all students on a study abroad exchange programme, thus levelling the playing field between European and international mobility. An Outward Student Mobility programme team has been established at the UK Higher Education International Unit to lead on the delivery of the strategy in conjunction with key stakeholders. The strategy has been consulted on over summer 2013 and is expected to be published early in the 2013/14 academic year. It is expected to include a range of activities including:

- research and data collection
- a promotion and awareness-raising campaign for study and work placements overseas

- coordination of financial support for mobility opportunities
- services provided by higher education institutions (HEIs) to build capacity and influence
- an online hub for all information and resources relevant to outward student mobility.

In July 2013, the Government also published its International Education Strategy: Global Growth and Prosperity (HM Government, 2013) which sets out plans for strategic development in the areas of international students; UK schools and colleges operating overseas; Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs); developing international participations; and building the UK brand under the banner of 'Education is GREAT Britain'.

Professional Development of Teachers, Trainers and School Leaders

In its 2010 Schools White Paper, *The Importance of Teaching* (for more information see the article on 'Specific Ongoing Reforms and Policy Developments at National Level'), the Government announced its intention to provide stronger incentives for the best graduates to go into teaching, especially in shortage subjects. Information about funding for postgraduate teacher training in 2013/14, including information on incentives, is available from the National College for Teaching and Leadership. The Government is also expanding Teach First, the programme which places excellent graduates in secondary schools in low income communities. Further information is available. School Direct, a new route into teaching was introduced in the 2012/13 academic year. Schools select and recruit their trainees working with teacher training providers. Further information is available. The National Scholarship Fund also provides financial support for teachers and special educational needs (SEN) support staff to develop their skills and deepen their subject knowledge. The National College for Teaching and Leadership was formed in April 2013 by the merger of the National College for School Leadership and the Teaching Agency. The single body is responsible for teacher training, continuing professional development and supporting school improvement. It aims to improve the quality of the education workforce and to help schools help each other to improve. In August 2013 the Education and Training Foundation was launched. Funded by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), the Foundation aims to improve professionalism and standards in the further education and skills sectors.

Efficient Funding and Evaluation

A new framework for school inspection came into force in September 2012 and was updated in September 2013 (Ofsted, 2013). Inspections now have a sharper focus on those aspects of schools' work that have the greatest impact on raising achievement. These are: the achievement of pupils at the school; the quality of teaching in the school; the behaviour and safety of pupils at the school; and the quality of leadership in, and management of, the school. Inspections continue to consider the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school and the extent to which the education provided by the school meets the needs of the range of pupils at the school, and in particular, the needs of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.

New school funding arrangements have been introduced in the 2013/14 school year. The reforms aim to move towards a nationally consistent funding system, led by the needs of pupils. A national funding formula will be introduced in the next Spending Review period (from 2015) which will ensure that schools in similar circumstances and with similar intakes

receive similar levels of funding. In preparation for this the way schools are funded has already been simplified so that there is greater consistency between local funding formulae. A key measure introduced to achieve this is the significant reduction of the number of factors which local authorities can use in their funding formulae for allocating funding to schools. The factors which are allowed are mostly to do with pupil characteristics rather than school characteristics. Further information on the reforms is available. Details of the school funding settlement 2013/14 are available [here](#).

In June 2013 the Department for Education (DfE) published a Review of Efficiency in the Schools System (DfE, 2013), looking at the relationship between how schools allocate their budgets and the results they achieve. The review seeks to highlight good practice to support schools in securing value for money [here](#).

Enhancing Creativity and Innovation, Including Entrepreneurship, at all Levels of Education and Training

Partnerships with Business, Research and Civil Society

Partnerships with business, research and society are embedded in the education system. For example, school governing bodies include representatives from the local community and, where appropriate, from religious organisations. Sponsored academies and free schools (publicly funded independent schools) have significant input from business, community or religious groups. See the article on 'Administration and Governance at Local and/or Institutional Level ' for more information on academies and free schools. Employers are involved in the development of vocational qualifications and Apprenticeships – and reforms outlined in the strategy document Rigour and Responsiveness in Skills (BIS, 2013) are taking this further (see the subheading 'Annual Growth Survey' above). The influential Wolf Report (see the article on 'Specific Developments and Ongoing Reforms at National Level') stated that employers are best placed to understand and evaluate vocational qualifications specific to their sector, and the Government has recently announced that only 'Tech levels' – vocational qualifications which have the support of a professional body or five employers that represent the sector involved – will be included in school performance tables. The Government has also recently called for greater employer involvement in careers guidance in schools.

A review of business-university collaboration was published in February 2012 (Wilson, 2012). This called for universities to be at the heart of the economy, to promote growth in the UK and to improve the employability of graduates. In higher education, the Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF) – provided by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) – supports institutions to engage in a broad range of activities with business, public sector and community partners. The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) also undertakes the annual Higher Education – Business and Community Interaction (HE BCI) Survey, which collects data on knowledge exchange between higher education institutions (HEIs) and the wider world of business and the community. HEFCE publishes a more detailed analysis of the HE-BCI data.

Transversal Key Competences, Entrepreneurship Education, e-literacy, Media Literacy, Innovative Learning Environments

‘Inspiring the Future’ is an initiative which coordinates volunteers from all employment sectors and professions going into secondary schools and colleges to talk about their jobs and the sectors they work in. The scheme, which was launched in July 2012, is backed by the main teaching unions and employer representative bodies. It is coordinated by the Education and Employers Taskforce, a charitable body which aims to ensure all schools and colleges have effective partnerships with employers.

The Government recognises that the best route out of unemployment for some young people may be to start up their own business. In the Budget 2012, it stated its intention to pilot the introduction of enterprise loans to help young people set up and grow their own business, alongside existing support such as the New Enterprise Allowance.

In May 2012, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) announced a new scheme as part of the Government’s enterprise education package to connect entrepreneurial university students and graduates with small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). ‘Milk round’ recruitment event fairs on campus, run in association with university entrepreneurship societies, aim to give students and SMEs the opportunities to arrange summer placements, develop entrepreneurial skills levels and create graduate jobs.

Specific Ongoing Reforms and Policy Developments at National Level

Organisational Reform

Following the change of government in May 2010, the Department for Education (DfE) was created, taking over responsibility for pre-school, primary and secondary education from the former Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) remained responsible for further and higher education and skills.

Three new executive agencies of the DfE have been formed:

- Standards and Testing Agency (formed on 1st April 2012)
- Education Funding Agency (formed on 1st October 2011)
- National College for Teaching and Leadership (formed by the merger, in April 2013, of the Teaching Agency, itself a recently created executive agency of the DfE, and the National College for School Leadership).

These executive agencies are formally part of the DfE, but operate with a degree of autonomy from the main department. They have taken over some of the duties and responsibilities of the former arm’s length public bodies (ALBs) (often described as non-departmental public bodies), which closed as part of a wide-ranging reform of public bodies.

Schools White Paper December 2010

In December 2010, the Department for Education (DfE) published a White Paper for schools which set out plans for whole-system reform. Proposals in *The Importance of Teaching* (DfE, 2010), many of which have been taken forward already and are discussed in this article, included:

- reforming initial teacher training to increase the amount of time trainees spend in the classroom, and establishing 'teaching schools' which would specialise in the initial training of teachers
- reforming the curriculum to reduce prescription, whilst refocusing on the core subject knowledge pupils need at each stage of their education
- introducing the 'English Baccalaureate' – as a school performance measure rather than a qualification for students, which recognises where students have achieved a GCSE grade C or above in a core of academic subjects – English, mathematics, history or geography, the sciences and a language (see the article on 'Assessment in General Lower Secondary Education')
- reforming school inspection so that inspectors spend more time in the classroom evaluating teaching and learning
- targeting more resources on the most deprived pupils through a new 'Pupil Premium' (see the article on 'Promoting Equity, Social Cohesion and Active Citizenship')
- giving all children a phonics-based progress check in Year 1 (age five to six).

Education Act 2011

The following measures have been implemented under the provisions of the Education Act 2011 which took forward the principles and proposals of the Schools White Paper (see above):

- School discipline: teachers have been given powers to search pupils for banned items and provided with better protection from false allegations made by pupils. Exclusion appeal panels have been replaced by review panels which do not have the power to force a school to reinstate an excluded pupil.
- The academies programme is being expanded. Secondary academies no longer need to have a curriculum specialism. Two new types of academies have been created: 16 to 19 academies (for 16- to 19-year-olds) and alternative provision academies. Existing academies are now known as 'academy schools'.
- The duty on local authorities (LAs) to provide School Improvement Partners (SIPs) to each of their maintained schools has been removed. Schools are able to buy in this type of support from their own budgets, should they feel it is required.
- Changes have been made to the inspections framework for schools (see the subheading 'Improving the Quality and Efficiency of Education and Training' in the article on 'Education and Training 2020 Strategic Framework').
- Maintained schools may be required to take part in international surveys of school and pupil performance.
- The Secretary of State can direct a local authority to issue a warning notice to a school on grounds of performance or safety concerns, and the Secretary of State's power to close schools is being extended to all schools eligible for intervention, rather than (as at previously) only those deemed by Ofsted to be in need of special measures.
- Early years provision: the 'free entitlement', notionally 15 hours a week for 38 weeks a year, is offered to two-year-olds from eligible disadvantaged families (see the subheading below on 'Early Childhood Education and Care').
- The Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA), the General Teaching Council for England (GTCE), the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA), and the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) have been abolished, with functions being extinguished or transferred to the Secretary of State.

Academies and Free Schools

Academies are publicly funded schools that are independent of local authorities. It is the Government's ambition to help every school which wishes to do so to become an academy. Academies are a distinct school type with a greater level of autonomy – see the article on 'Administration and Governance at Local and/or Institutional Level'. Although the first academies opened in 2002, in most cases these replaced weak or underperforming secondary schools. The Academies Act 2010 enabled all maintained schools, including primary, secondary and special schools, to apply to become an academy and simplified the process. The Education Act 2011 enabled the academies programme to be further extended by allowing the establishment of 16 to 19 academies (for 16- to 19-year-olds) and alternative provision academies, and to remove the requirement for academies to have a curriculum specialism. On 1 September August 2013 there were 3 304 academies open in England (including primary, secondary and special education academies). There is considerable variation across local authorities as to the proportions of maintained/academy schools in the area. A list of open academies and academy projects in development is updated monthly by the Department for Education.

As well as encouraging existing schools to convert to academy status, the Government has introduced changes to enable more new providers to enter the publicly funded school system in response to parental demand. The Academies Act 2010 makes it easier for groups of parents, teachers, charities, trusts and religious and voluntary groups to set up 'free schools'. Once established, these free schools are legally academies. In September 2011, the first (24) free schools opened across England and, by May 2013, this number had grown to 81 with a further 109 due to open from September 2013 onwards.

Early Childhood Education and Care

Free (government-funded) early education is available to all three- and four-year-old children in England for 15 hours per week (and for 38 weeks a year). This entitlement is being extended to the most disadvantaged two-year-olds. Prior to September 2013 there were 20 000 disadvantaged two-year-olds in free early education. The introduction of the new extended entitlement is being phased in so that around 20 per cent of the most disadvantaged two-year-olds became eligible in September 2013, and will increase to around 40 per cent from September 2014. Sure Start Children's Centres provide access to integrated early education and childcare services in every community. Local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient centres to meet the needs of the area. The primary goal of centres is improving outcomes for young children and families, with a particular focus on the most disadvantaged, to reduce inequalities in: child development and school readiness; parenting aspirations and parenting skills; and child and family health and life chances. The Government will ensure centres deliver proven early intervention programmes to support families in the greatest need through: a reformed Ofsted inspection framework; the trialling of payment by results arrangements; and the increased involvement of parents, communities and other organisations.

Following the independent 'Tickell' review (2011), a revised and slimmed down Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (birth to age five) (DfE, 2012) came into force in September 2012. The revised framework is designed to:

- simplify the learning and development requirements by reducing the number of early learning goals from 69 to 17
- simplify the statutory assessment of children's development at age five
- place stronger emphasis on the three prime areas of communication and language; physical development; and personal, social and emotional development
- introduce a progress check at age two to be carried out by health visitors (registered nurses or midwives who have undertaken specialised training) to ensure children get any additional support they need before they start school
- strengthen partnerships between professionals and parents.

The Department for Education published a report entitled *More Great Childcare* (DfE, 2013) in January 2013, outlining government plans to raise the status and quality of the early years education and childcare workforce, remove unnecessary burdens on providers, improve the regulatory regime and give more choice to parents. The reform of the early year's workforce includes the following measures:

- Early years teachers in early year's settings will be graduates on a par with school teachers (but will not hold Qualified Teacher Status – QTS).
- Early years educators (not teachers) will hold A level equivalent qualifications and provide support to early years teachers. They will often act as assistants to early years teachers, or may deliver teaching, learning and childcare themselves.
- From September 2013, early years teacher trainees will have to meet the same entry requirements as primary trainee teachers – including at least a GCSE grade C in English, mathematics and science, or equivalent.
- From September 2014, early years teacher trainees will have to pass the same skills tests as classroom teacher trainees before they start their course (see the article on 'Initial Education for Teachers working in Early Childhood and School Education').

In July 2013, the Government also published *More Affordable Childcare* (DfE, 2013) which sets out plans for improving the supply of affordable childcare by helping schools offer more care out of school hours and at holiday times; relaxing planning and regulatory requirements for childcare providers; and supporting parents to access more informal care.

Assessment and Accountability in Primary Education

In November 2010, the Secretary of State for Education set up a review into testing, assessment and accountability at key stage 2 (Years 3 to 6 - ages 7 to 11). The final report of the review was issued in June 2011 and, in July 2011, the Government accepted all recommendations in full. These included significant changes to the end of key stage 2 statutory testing arrangements, which have since been phased in:

- Replacing the current writing test in Year 6 (at the end of key stage 2), with teacher assessment of writing composition from 2013. This aims to ensure that pupils can be more creative and to overcome the dangers of teaching to the test. This teacher assessment will make up the larger part of the overall writing judgement.
- Introducing a test of some of the essential skills needed to become fluent, confident writers – spelling, grammar, punctuation and vocabulary from 2012/13.
- Publishing more data in the primary school performance tables, including new three-year rolling averages for the end of key stage 2 assessments from 2012, to give a more rounded picture of a school's performance.

- Primary schools providing more information on pupils' performance to secondary schools, so that Year 7 teachers (receiving 11-year-olds in secondary schools) are clear right from the outset about children's attainment and the areas where extra work is needed.

In July 2013 the Government launched a consultation on proposed measures to raise standards in primary schools. These include:

- Higher floor standards: these are the minimum standards for pupil attainment that the Government expects schools to meet. It is proposed that 85 per cent (currently 60 per cent) of a school's pupils (except those with particular special needs) should be expected to reach a good level of attainment. Progress will also be a key element to be reported to reflect the challenging intakes of some schools.
- Updated tests for 11-year-olds, in line with the higher expectations of the new National Curriculum (to be introduced starting in September 2014). The tests will be in mathematics; reading; and spelling, punctuation and grammar. The science test for a sample of pupils will also remain.
- Schools will be able to design their own systems of measuring pupil performance and reporting this to parents. Ofsted will need to see evidence of pupils' progress but inspections will be based on whatever pupil tracking data schools choose to keep.
- A new reporting method which will see each pupil compared against their peers nationally. Each pupil will be placed in 10 per cent bands, or deciles. Pupils' positions will only be made available to parents and schools.
- A baseline assessment to measure the progress that has been made by 11-year-olds.

2014 National Curriculum

A new National Curriculum will be introduced in primary and secondary schools in England in September 2014 for key stages 1 to 4 (5 to 16 years). This follows a major review of the National Curriculum in England which began in January 2011. An Expert Panel, appointed by the Secretary of State to provide an evidence base drawing on best practice, published its initial findings and recommendations in December 2011. Among the Panel's recommendations were that all existing National Curriculum subjects should be retained as compulsory subjects, the level of prescription reduced, and that modern languages should be introduced as a compulsory subject at key stage 2 in primary schools. The final 2014 National Curriculum was published in September 2013 for first teaching in schools from September 2014. Further information including the programmes of study is available from the Department for Education.

All subjects included in the current National Curriculum have been retained at primary and secondary level, with modern foreign languages being added as a compulsory subject at key stage 2 (ages 7–11). Apart from in the core subjects (English, mathematics and science) the programmes of study have been slimmed down and now focus on the essential skills and knowledge which every child should master. The programmes of study for English, mathematics and science have been made more demanding than the current National Curriculum in order to raise standards and align England with countries which have high-performing education systems.

The current system of levels and level descriptors – which is considered to be confusing for parents and bureaucratic for teachers – is being removed and will not be replaced. The new

programmes of study emphasise what pupils should know and be able to do, setting out the content that each child should be expected to master each year. Schools will be able to introduce their own approaches to formative assessment, to support pupil attainment and progression.

14- to 19-year-olds

There are a number of ongoing developments relating to provision for 14- to 19-year-olds. These include reform of the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examination; restructuring provision and increasing the age of participation for those aged 16+; and the ongoing reforms of vocational education for 14- to 19-year-olds following the influential Wolf Report (Wolf, 2011).

General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE)

Following concerns raised about standards in the White Paper *The Importance of Teaching* (DfE, 2010), the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) is undergoing a number of fundamental changes. GCSEs are single subject qualifications which students prepare for during key stage 4 (from age 14) and complete at age 16 (the end of full-time compulsory education).

From September 2012 GCSEs have moved to a linear assessment model (all examinations are taken at the end of the course, ending the possibility of re-sitting individual modules). From January 2013 spelling, punctuation and grammar are taken account of in the marking of examination papers requiring extended answers in certain subjects and some individual subjects have been tightened up to ensure students cover the whole curriculum. From June to August 2013, a consultation was held on reforming subject content and assessment objectives for certain key subjects to make them more challenging and rigorous. The subjects are: English language, English literature, mathematics, biology, chemistry, physics, combined science double award, geography and history. Revised specifications for English language, English literature and mathematics are expected to be ready for first teaching in September 2015, with the first exams being taken in summer 2017 whilst revised GCSEs in science, history and geography are anticipated for first teaching in September 2016, with first exams in 2018.

Ofqual (the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulations) is also reviewing the regulatory framework for GCSEs, consulting on the approach to assessing and reporting achievement including how coursework and controlled assessment could be largely replaced by linear, externally marked end-of-course exams.

16 to 19 participation and study programmes

The Government has raised the participation age in England to 17 in 2013 and it will rise again to 18 in 2015. All 16- and 17-year-olds are now expected to participate in education or training. This can be full-time at school, college or with a training provider; part-time education and training combined with full time work or volunteering; or through an Apprenticeship. Further information is available.

In September 2013, following the recommendations of the Wolf Report (Wolf, 2011), '16–19 Study Programmes' have been introduced. These are based on the principle that all 16- to 19-year-olds in full-time state-funded provision, including those on academic or vocational

education programmes, should have the opportunity to study coherent, well-thought-out programmes which offer them breadth and depth, are rigorously assessed and do not limit their options for future study or work. Changes to funding, monitoring and reporting arrangements in 16–19 education are supporting the implementation of the Study Programmes. From September 2013:

- All students who are able should take either A levels, or a substantial qualification recognised by employers as being of real benefit to them in securing work or a university place. Where appropriate, students will also take part in work experience.
- Students who don't have a General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) in English and mathematics at Grade C or above at 16 will continue to study these subjects after 16.
- Students who aren't able to study for a qualification will take a programme of work experience, . This will focus on developing their employability skills, along with work to develop numeracy, literacy and other core education skills.

Vocational qualifications for 14- to 19-year-olds are being reformed to ensure that young people follow substantial courses which are rigorously assessed and offer good progression opportunities. Changes have already taken place to the vocational qualifications available at level 2 (equivalent to GCSEs in the National Qualifications Framework). In addition, in July 2013, the Government announced that the only vocational qualifications at level 3 (the same level as GCE A levels in the National Qualifications Framework), which can be reported in school and college performance tables, will be 'Tech levels'. These are vocational qualifications which have the support of a professional body, or of five employers that represent the sector involved, and are at least the size of an A level. A new bursary scheme for 16- to 19-year-olds – the 16–19 Bursary Fund – was introduced in September 2012. This is made up of two parts: a guaranteed payment to a small group of the most vulnerable, and a discretionary fund for schools and colleges to distribute. The DfE website contains further information. The bursary scheme replaces the former Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA).

Teacher Reforms

Raising the quality of teachers is a priority in England as set out in the 2011 strategy *Training our Next Generation of Outstanding Teachers* (DfE, 2011). As part of this drive, for teacher training courses starting from September 2013, prospective teachers are expected to sit rigorous English and mathematics tests before being accepted onto courses of initial teacher training. Other measures to raise the standard of teachers entering the profession include enhanced financial incentives for applicants with first class degrees in physics, chemistry, mathematics and modern foreign languages.

From 2013/14 teachers' salaries in maintained schools in England will be more closely linked to performance. Schools will also have greater flexibility over how they pay their teachers to enable them to reward their best teachers or to respond to recruitment and retention issues. Academies (publicly funded independent schools – see the subheading 'Academies and Free Schools' above) already enjoy flexibility relating to teachers' pay. Further information is available from the Department for Education. New standards for teachers came into effect in September 2012, following a review of existing measures of teacher performance and conduct, including the professional standards for teachers. A new single set of standards has replaced those required to achieve Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and to pass induction (the

Core Standards). The new standards incorporate standards for behaviour and conduct, and have replaced the former Code of Conduct and Practice for Registered Teachers. The review website is. The aims of these reforms are to:

- introduce simpler performance management regulations which set a few basic requirements, remove many and leave other decisions to schools
- introduce an optional new 'model policy' for schools that deals with both performance and capability/disciplinary issues
- allow poorly performing teachers to be removed in about a term, a process that previously took a year or more
- clarify that staff illness need not bring disciplinary processes to a halt.