

Educational inequality is the most pressing issue of our time. The most persistently disadvantaged pupils are almost 2 years (22.6 months) behind at the end of GCSEs – the widest the gap has been since 2011.¹ If we continue as we are it will take 500 years to close this disadvantage gap.

Tackling this is a moral imperative. It is simply unfair that how much your parents earn determines your outcomes in education. It is also an economic imperative for a post-Brexit Britain. To compete in a globalised world and to tackle 21st Century challenges such as climate change, we need to support every young person to achieve their potential.

The Fair Education Alliance is a network of 150 organisations from business, the third sector and education. We are committed to tackling inequality in education through collective action, policy and influencing and scaling impact.

We want the incoming political party to make a long-term, cross-governmental department and strategic commitment to work with us to tackle inequalities in education.

The root causes of these inequalities are complex and will not be fixed by any one organisation, sector, political party or even government department. However, there is already a significant amount of knowledge, practice and understanding of what needs to be done and how but we need to join this up with a long term, strategic and comprehensive plan for improving outcomes for the most disadvantaged. This needs to be across government departments (not just DfE) and needs to work with our cross-sector alliance and build on what we already know to deliver systemic change.

As part of this explicit commitment to tackling inequalities, we want the government to focus on three things which make the biggest difference to addressing the disadvantage gap.



1. Supporting world-class teachers and leaders to work in the most disadvantaged communities.

Great teaching has shown time and time again to have a transformational effect on student outcomes. However, schools in areas with high levels of deprivation are more likely to struggle to attract teachers and retain them.

We are calling for:

- **Investment in professional and leadership development for teachers and school leaders.** We want a renewed focus and investment in continuous personal development, leadership development and teacher wellbeing to attract and keep staff in the education profession, particularly in areas of high disadvantage.



2. Creating an education system that develops the whole child - one which values and promotes skills and well-being alongside academic attainment.

Decreased school funding alongside rigorous accountability measures have forced schools to make tough decisions about what they deliver to their pupils. Often the first thing to go in schools are activities which develop social and emotional skills and wellbeing such as extra-curricular activities, pastoral care or beyond-curriculum learning.

We are calling for an education system that delivers on skills and wellbeing alongside academic attainment to prepare all children to learn no matter their background and to achieve their potential in and out of school, no matter their socio-economic background.

We are calling for:

- **A shared language and framework for skills development using the Skills Builder Partnership framework.** This needs to be embedded in all schools and learning environments to ensure that every child develops the skills they need to thrive.
- **An education system that isn't solely focused on grades and attainment measures.** We want more emphasis on whole school approaches to wellbeing and development of social and emotional competencies. This should be an outcome of education in and of itself, but is also essential to enable improvements in attainment. We welcome the recent inclusion of character in DfE strategy and steps to include metrics around this in Ofsted measures and would like to build on this.
- **An education system that doesn't stop at the school gates.** Parental engagement should be a critical component of education and we should be working with communities and parents to develop learning in the home and community.



3. Improving support for all post-16 routes, enabling every young person to fulfil their potential after school.

The post-16 education and training landscape is more complex than ever, and many students lack the information, support and guidance to make decisions about their next steps – whether that be further education, an apprenticeship, university, or employment. Currently this means that those from disadvantaged backgrounds are still six times as likely to be recorded as not in education, training or employment after age 16.

We are calling for:

- **Increased collaboration between employers and post-16 education providers in the way they provide information about the range of options available and how they are interconnected.** We support the work of the Careers & Enterprise Company and would like this to continue under future government policy.
- **Continuing to embed a whole school approach to careers and post-16 progression in schools.** We welcomed the policy of a designated careers leader in every school in 2018 and would also like this to continue.