

2017 / 2018

SECONDARY EDUCATION

The Parliamentary Review

A YEAR IN PERSPECTIVE

■ FOREWORDS

The Rt Hon Theresa May MP

The Rt Hon Damian Hinds MP

The Rt Hon The Lord Blunkett

■ WEST MIDLANDS REPRESENTATIVES

Erdington Academy

Ark Boulton Academy

The Telford Priory School

Etone College

Telford Langley and Telford Park Schools

Fairfax School

Holy Trinity Catholic School

Ellowes Hall Sports College

Selly Park Girls' School

■ FEATURES

Review of the Year

Review of Parliament



The Rt Hon Theresa May MP

Prime Minister

British politics provides ample material for analysis in the pages of *The Parliamentary Review*. For Her Majesty's Government, our task in the year ahead is clear: to achieve the best Brexit deal for Britain and to carry on our work to build a more prosperous and united country – one that truly works for everyone.

We have already made good progress towards our goal of leaving the EU, so that we take back control of our laws, money and borders, while negotiating a deep and special partnership with it after we have left that is good for jobs and security. The EU Withdrawal Act is now on the statute books to provide legal certainty at the point of exit. We have reached agreement on protecting the rights of EU citizens living here in the UK and British citizens living in the EU, on an implementation period to give businesses time to prepare, and on a fair financial settlement. We are now pressing ahead to reach an agreement with the EU on our future relationship that honours the result of the EU referendum and sets the UK on course for a prosperous future.

Getting the right Brexit deal is essential; but it will not be sufficient on its own to secure a more prosperous future for Britain. We also need to ensure that our economy is ready for what tomorrow will bring. Our Modern Industrial Strategy is our plan to do that. It means government stepping up to secure the foundations of our productivity: providing an education system that delivers the skills our economy needs, improving school standards and transforming technical education. It is all about taking action for the long-term that will pay dividends in the future.

But it also goes beyond that. Government, the private sector and academia working together as strategic partners achieve far more than we could separately.

That is why we have set an ambitious goal of lifting UK public and private research and development investment to 2.4 per cent of GDP by 2027.

I believe that Britain can look to the future with confidence. We are leaving the EU and setting a new course for prosperity as a global trading nation. We have a Modern Industrial Strategy that is strengthening the foundations of our economy and helping us to seize the opportunities of the future. We are investing in the public services we all rely on and helping them to grow and improve. Building on our country's great strengths – our world-class universities and researchers, our excellent services sector, our cutting edge manufacturers, our vibrant creative industries, our dedicated public servants – we can look towards a new decade that is ripe with possibility. The government I lead is doing all it can to make that brighter future a reality for everyone in our country.

“Providing an education system that delivers the skills our economy needs, improving school standards and transforming technical education”

The Rt Hon Damian Hinds MP

Secretary of State for Education



If you had asked me last year where would I most like to work, I would not have hesitated: education. Nothing is more important than helping children to discover a love of learning and to leave school happy, well rounded and with all the qualifications they need for whatever they want to do. That is what England's 450,000 teachers are devoted to.

I have spent my first months as education secretary visiting as many nurseries, schools, colleges and universities as possible and seeing for myself the contribution offered and challenges faced by our early years professionals, teachers and lecturers. They are the ones in the front line of our drive to improve education for every child.

My mission is for every child to have a world-class education and the chance to fulfil their potential, whatever their background. Thanks to the hard work of heads and teachers we've made huge progress.

Since coming into government in 2010, 1.9 million more children are being taught in good or outstanding schools - representing 86 per cent of pupils compared to 66 per cent in 2010. Since the phonics screening checks were introduced, 154,000 more six year olds are on track to become fluent readers; and we have seen the attainment gap narrow by at least ten per cent at both primary and secondary school.

We have reformed GCSEs, creating a new gold standard in qualifications, and A levels to better prepare students for university. Record numbers of disadvantaged 18 year olds are now going to university for full-time study.

These are real tangible achievements that we will build on as we continue to improve the education that every child receives.

But in providing that education, I know that the most important factor is the person at the front of the classroom. I want this to be a profession which draws the best, most gifted and committed teachers and then develops and keeps them.

However, it's clear too many teachers are having to cope with a workload that makes huge demands of them before they even set foot inside the classroom. Working with Ofsted, we are challenging excessive and unnecessary marking and data collection, as well as reforming our accountability system to make sure good schools are not burdened by multiple inspections and multiple demands for data. This will free up teachers to do what they came into the profession to do: teach.

One of the most important ways government can improve education is to give great schools the freedom to innovate and, then, to share their ideas and best practice. I'm pleased this year's *Parliamentary Review* gives a platform to some brilliant and innovative schools.

I look forward to continuing to work with this whole sector so we can make sure every child, in every classroom, can fulfil their potential.

“One of the most important ways government can improve education is to give great schools the freedom to innovate ”



The Rt Hon The Lord Blunkett

Secretary of State for Education and
Employment (1997-2001) and
Co-Chairman, *The Parliamentary Review*

This summer has been a very unusual time for many young people and their parents. Unusual, not because of the nerve-wracking wait for examination results that takes place each year but because this is the first set of full results since the process was changed substantially.

Very simply, instead of A* to C grade as a judgment of academic ability to move on to post-16 education, as opposed to a vocational route, a 1 to 9 scale is now in place, with nine being akin to an A*, although judgment on exact comparators is very difficult.

Final exams, without the previous assessment process, will benefit those who have an extremely good retentive memory. I did, when I undertook my own qualifications in my six-year battle to get the qualifications to go to university. Others aren't so fortunate.

So, in the Labour Party's review of the present education system, there are many strands to pull together. My own review on behalf of the previous leader of the Labour Party back in 2014 was very much about how to reinforce partnership and collaboration, concentrating on standards and action in the classroom rather than structures.

The National Audit Office estimate that around £745 million has been spent over recent years on academisation of schools. For some, this has resulted in the change needed, the boost required to bring about substantial improvements. For the system as a whole, according to the Office for Standards in Education, fragmentation and "atomisation" has led to a very mixed picture.

In Labour's manifesto for the election in June last year, a promise was given that there would be a National Education Service. While this clearly cannot mean centralising decision-making in Whitehall, equality of

opportunity and a relentless drive from the centre to improve standards would be welcome. But for me, the truly "big" idea is to place further emphasis on lifelong learning.

It is self-evident, not least in the responses from business, that a greater emphasis on technical education is needed. The so-called T Levels have proved extremely difficult to scale up from a small pilot. The Apprenticeship Levy, which is a good idea, has been handled with a degree of stubbornness which beggars belief. Why not redistribute the substantial underspend to those businesses willing to implement positive change?

It is the world of tomorrow that both major political parties should be addressing. The development of robotics and the implications of geo-political change, not least in the replacement of oil as a key driver of industrial and transport needs, all bring very real challenges.

At its simplest, we're talking about a further wave of economic, industrial and social upheaval. We've all talked a lot about this, but preparation for the seismic change which is coming is significant only by its absence.

While children aged 10 and 11 struggle with the exact name of a particular type of verb, the world is passing us by. In the post-Brexit era, it is a revolution not just in the delivery of the basics in the classroom, necessary as that is, but also a vision of the kind of education for and throughout life, which liberates the talent of each individual, and addresses the economic needs of the nation and the challenge of global competition.

Let us hope that both the Labour and Conservative frontbench can move beyond the structural tinkering and political meddling, into something worthy of Britain in the mid-21st century.

Economy thrives while politics divides

It's been over two years since the country voted to leave the European Union, but Brexit continues to hang over British politics like an all-encompassing dark, brooding cloud, discombobulating established relationships and upturning traditional verities wherever we look.

Social class no longer largely determines how you vote in the UK. The latest polls suggest the Tories now enjoy a lead among working-class voters. They've always won a chunk of working class votes – Disraeli called them his “Angels in Marble” – but never a majority.

As for Labour, even under its most left-wing leader ever, it now garners considerable support among the professional middle classes, especially in the major metropolitan conurbations.

The reason for this psephological seachange is Brexit. If you voted Leave, you are now more likely to vote Tory; if Remain, Labour.

Brexit is now *the* dividing line within Labour and the Conservatives. It splits the cabinet and shadow cabinet, backbenchers of both parties and their voters in the country. The Tory divisions are more obvious to see because they are the governing party and make big news. But Jeremy Corbyn has managed to lose 103 frontbenchers, often through Brexit-related resignations, which doesn't quite have the impact of Boris Johnson or David Davis walkouts, but must be something of a record nevertheless.

Brexit has also induced something of *rigor mortis* on both frontbenches. For nearly all of the past parliamentary year, cabinet ministers and leading Labour spokespeople have been unable to answer the simplest questions on our post-Brexit

state when it comes to the customs union, the Irish border, immigration policy and the single market. Only recently, with the Article 50 deadline looming, has some clarity emerged – and not always. I believe this widespread prevarication has added to voter disillusion.

Just as important, nearly all non-Brexit matters have been swept into a Brexit-induced Bermuda Triangle. This is understandable. But it has added to the gulf between parliament and the people.

The impact of Brexit on the parliamentary process has been generally unpredictable and often amusing. Left-wing Remainers now speak of the House of Lords as a bastion of democracy. Right-wing Leavers sound increasingly like peasants with pitchforks, determined to bring the whole edifice of the upper house tumbling down.

Jeremy Corbyn, who's spent his political career railing against the iniquities of the market economy, now poses as the champion of business (up to a point). Brexiteer Tories regularly mutter anti-business sentiments in unprintable language.

Overarching all this turmoil and uncertainty, as I explained in

The Parliamentary Review last year, is the resurgence of the two-party system in England, another consequence of Brexit. At the 2017 general election, the Leaver Right collapsed into the Tories and the Remainer Left flocked to Mr Corbyn's Labour party. It is beyond strange that the two main parties should be doing so well when many regard them as weaker, less talented and more divided than they've been in living memory. But they got easily over 80 per cent of the English vote between them in 2017 and all polls since suggest that is the new *status quo*.

The fundamental parliamentary fact in this post-referendum era is that there is no majority for what hardliners on either side of the Brexit divide would like. So, when it comes to determining the eventual shape of Brexit, parliament is very much in the driving seat, as the government has found out the hard way. The problem is it's not sure what parliament wants that shape to be.

Business might despair at what it sees as an increasingly dysfunctional political system. But it should take comfort from the fact that economics and politics are, for the moment, going their separate ways. No matter how much you might think politicians are mucking it up, the economy in general and business in particular continue to defy them.

I have thought for sometime that business and the economy are in much better shape than established opinion would have it. There were signs in the early summer of 2018 that this was indeed the case. But, by the time you read this, you'll have a much better idea if I'm right. Keep your fingers crossed – not for my sake, but for the country's!



Neil believes the two-party system is the new *status quo*

Selly Park Girls' School



Supporting progress in art



Head teacher Lisa Darwood

Selly Park Girls' School provides an outstanding education to its pupils. Despite 60 per cent of pupils receiving the pupil premium and 76 per cent having English as an additional language, the school continues to thrive. As well as Ofsted designating it an "outstanding school", achievement and progress are at consistently high levels. The school is proud of its history and its beautiful, ornate Victorian buildings, which are complemented by recently built modern, state-of-the-art facilities. Lisa Darwood, head teacher, discusses the school's vision and the challenges it faces, the successes pioneered using pupil premium, the school's international links, and its strategic plans.

REPORT CARD SELLY PARK GIRLS' SCHOOL

- » Head teacher: Lisa Darwood
- » Founded in 1911
- » Based in Birmingham
- » Type of school: Community secondary girls' school
- » No. of students: 686
- » Ofsted: "Outstanding"
- » www.sellyparkgirls.org

Introduction

On behalf of the students, staff and governors, I would like to welcome you to Selly Park Girls' School. Our school is known for its high expectations, academic success, first-class education and its innovative approach. Our vision and values underpin all that we do. Indeed, everyone who knows us or visits our school speaks of our distinct ethos. Our core belief is that the most effective education is when teachers and parents work together in a genuine partnership, which results in our students being proud of their personal achievements. Our hard-working students are imbued with a sense of purpose and determination and boast some of the best progress rates in the city, despite hailing from some of the most disadvantaged wards in Birmingham.

“Our students become upwardly mobile after feeling empowered by the education they receive”



Developing skills

“We are uncompromising in our ambition and our hard-working students boast some of the best progress rates in the city”

Vision

The success of Selly Park Girls' School is built on four key pillars: inspirational teachers, aspirational pupils, engaged stakeholders and a vibrant environment. Our forward-thinking governors work closely with our dynamic senior leadership team and focus on consistently improving outcomes for all pupils – we are uncompromising in our ambition. Our inspiring teachers are complemented by our support staff in helping our pupils to achieve the highest grades and make excellent progress. Being a relatively small secondary school benefits our pupils: we know them individually, their strengths and areas for development, and this results in the provision of our highly effective programme of interventions and targeted support with which pupils actively engage.

Living out our aims to help the disadvantaged and increase social mobility

Selly Park is a microcosm of multicultural Birmingham and we are proud of our diverse student population. Many ethnic groups attend the school and enjoy harmonious relationships. Initiatives such as

Unicef's Rights Respecting embed the notion that children are valued and can thrive in a safe and protective environment. Attainment and progress for the disadvantaged is well above the national average. Our students become upwardly mobile after feeling empowered by the secondary education they receive.

Winners of Pupil Premium Award

It is no surprise that we were the winners of the coveted SSAT Pupil Premium Award for the Midlands (2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017). Not only was the high attainment and exceptional progress applauded, but the excellent range of opportunities afforded to disadvantaged students was also remarked upon. In July 2018, we were also awarded 'Secondary School of the Year' at the Education Awards, the award identifies and celebrates establishments, people and organisations that go above and beyond to promote excellence within the education System. We ensure students have the crucial life skills that allow them to be global citizens. In addition, the school runs a very well-attended Saturday school which supports Key Stage 4 students in their quest for success.



Inspirational teaching and inquisitive students



An exciting and expansive curriculum

In supportive but robust departmental reviews, heads of department are coached and encouraged to provide an outstanding curriculum for our students. At Selly Park, we believe that the curriculum should be challenging and rigorous, but also rich in depth and breadth and ultimately enjoyable. Whereas some schools are narrowing their curriculum, I am proud to report that nearly two-thirds of our Key Stage 4 students are entered for the English Baccalaureate, enjoying languages as diverse as Urdu, Arabic and Russian. We are also committed to offering an exciting extracurricular programme. Recent excursions include art trips to the Oxford galleries, the Equality and Diversity residential trip to our national link school in the Lake District as well as various trips to theatres and museums. The music department also works in partnership with the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain and the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire and we provide free music tuition for all our pupils. The history department marked the recent centenary of the school by viewing rare primary sources in the form of the school diaries and letters written first-hand. As well as Science Club, which is run with the help of STEM ambassadors from the University of Birmingham, the school is also linked with the Brilliant Club at the University of Warwick.

International links

I am perhaps most proud of our international links and we are recipients of the International School Award. We are also an Expert Centre for the Global Learning Programme. We remain determined to be outward looking and retain a global dimension. We give pupils the opportunities to develop an appreciation of the diversity and richness of worldwide cultures, so they become global citizens and can thrive in an ever-changing world through



International theme day

their appreciation of meaningful links with schools locally, nationally and internationally. Together, the school has enjoyed visits to a wide range of places across the four corners of the globe and we have visited our long-established links with schools in Ghana and Zimbabwe this year. Personally, I have taken pupils to South Africa where they have delivered at the IAPESGW World Congress Meeting on the topic "Muslim girls' participation in physical activity". Over the last few years, we have hosted international dignitaries. Moreover, we have an International Staff and Pupil Council, which ensures that the global dimension is truly embedded in our curriculum.

The future of Selly Park

We have plans to expand the school's roll over the next five years in a sensitive and sustainable fashion. We are intent on retaining the benefits of a small school as it allows us to prioritise the individual needs of our students. We will continue to have high aspirations and expectations for all our pupils and aim to develop not only their academic success but also relationships, which are characterised by kindness, tolerance, helpfulness and respect. Our doors are always open, and we would be proud to share our success story to any interested visitors.

“Selly Park is a microcosm of multicultural Birmingham”

Striving for success

