

Education Committee

Oral evidence: [Accountability Hearings](#), HC 341

Wednesday 27 June 2018

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Members present: Robert Halfon (Chair); Lucy Allan; Michelle Donelan; James Frith; Emma Hardy; Trudy Harrison; Ian Mearns; Lucy Powell; Thelma Walker; Mr William Wragg.

Questions 1073 - 1205

Witness

[I:](#) Rt Hon Damian Hinds MP, Secretary of State, Department for Education

Examination of witness

Rt Hon Damian Hinds MP, Secretary of State, Department for Education.

Q1073 **Chair:** Thank you for coming today. For the benefit of the tape, could you introduce yourself and state your title?

Damian Hinds: I am Damian Hinds and I am Secretary of State for Education.

James Frith: I would just refer Members to the register of interests. I am a director of a careers education company.

Q1074 **Chair:** Last night the Chief Secretary, Liz Truss, said in a speech, "We have to recognise that it is not macho just to demand more money. It is much tougher to demand better value and challenge the blob of vested interests within your Department". Do you agree with her?

Damian Hinds: I am not sure how macho fits in with these things. When it comes to our key public services, of which education is one, we need to make sure that we have the level of resourcing that we would all expect for our own children and for the nation's children, and indeed for the training and further development that they go on to do in early and later adulthood. We also have to make sure that money is well spent, that every pound of public funding counts, because, after all, at the end of the day it is public funding.

Q1075 **Chair:** Following on from that, does that mean that given that the National Health Service now has a 10-year plan and a five-year funding settlement, which is very welcome, you are battling for a 10-year plan for education and a similar funding settlement?

Damian Hinds: I think having longer-term visibility of funding is helpful in any sector: the private sector, the public sector, charities, for everybody. It is usually better to have further visibility. Bringing in the national funding formula is part of our approach to that so that it is more predictable what is happening on funding in education. Obviously, as we come up to the spending review, all spending Departments will be making their case. I will be making our case for—

Q1076 **Chair:** Will you be making the case for a similar five-year plan so we do not have a situation like we did last year when welcome money was announced but it was not part of the overall plan?

Damian Hinds: Yes, I will be keen for as much stability and forward visibility as possible.

Q1077 **Chair:** Clearly, the Defence Department is busy putting its tanks on the Treasury lawn. Are you putting your tanks on the Treasury lawn? Do you not think that the public would prefer more textbooks to tanks?



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Damian Hinds: The public, quite rightly, and I want to know that our nurseries, our early years settings, our schools, our colleges, our universities, our training providers, our children's social care, all of this is funded to the degree that we would expect for our society. As we have discussions in the spending review, these are all the things that we have to consider.

Q1078 **Chair:** How much extra funding are you fighting for? We were very clear from the National Health Service and from Jeremy Hunt about how much he thought was needed. We are clear from the Defence Department about how much they think they need. How much does the Department for Education need to have a school, education and college system that is fit for purpose?

Damian Hinds: The spending review is not beginning yet, Chairman. We have in the school system, as you know, secured a further £1.3 billion over two years, which enables the holding constant of per pupil real terms funding in schools at a time when pupil numbers are growing. That is a very important point. Normally when people talk about protecting per pupil numbers, it is at times when pupil numbers are falling. Right now pupil numbers are rising, so this is an increase in the amount of money going into schools.

Q1079 **Chair:** How much extra funding are you fighting for? How much extra funding does the education system need?

Damian Hinds: As I say, the spending review has not begun yet and when it does we will have the analyses and we will have the discussions.

Q1080 **Chair:** I mention it because we know the NHS now—even though the spending review has not happened—are going to get an extra £20 billion.

Damian Hinds: That is a settlement that has been made outside of the spending review.

Q1081 **Chair:** Yes, but nevertheless are you not fighting for a similar settlement? Maybe not necessarily £20 billion extra a year, but surely you would think to make sure we have an education system that is fit for purpose, an education skill system for the 21st century, that this is the extra funding we need. You must have a rough figure of what you think it should be.

Damian Hinds: We are always striving, Chairman, to make sure that the funding is there. I will just go through some of the elements. On early years and childcare, there was £1 billion more being spent than under previous Governments and we had more entitlements to free—that is to say, taxpayer-funded—early years and childcare than any previous Governments in this country. In primary and secondary, if you look at the international comparisons, we are quite high spenders on education compared to other key countries that you would always seek to compare against. If you look historically, the amount being spent per child is considerably more than it was a generation ago. Beyond that, to



HOUSE OF COMMONS

apprenticeships, the levy is a big structural change in the way we do vocational education training.

Chair: But all this is what—

Damian Hinds: I am not done yet. There will be a doubling of the amount of money available—

Q1082 **Chair:** We know all that. What we are asking about is the future.

Damian Hinds: I am talking about the future.

Q1083 **Chair:** That has already been announced.

Damian Hinds: Then there will be an extra £500 million a year on T levels. We have a review going on at the moment on post-18 education and funding, to look again at that system and make sure that that is working, and we will have the national retraining scheme coming in. Right across the age range, if you like, on education we are constantly working to make sure that we have both the right resourcing but also the right reform, the right structures, and to make sure that the money is being spent absolutely as well as it can be.

Q1084 **Chair:** Could I ask you about maintained nursery schools, the jewel in the crown? Over 60% are outstanding. What is happening with the transitional relief of the £50 million a year? I know there is a consultation at the moment, but where are we with that?

Damian Hinds: Yes, maintained nursery schools—I think there are around 400 of them. I have had a chance to visit some as well and they do an outstanding job. As you know, they take disproportionately high numbers of disadvantaged children and those with special needs. They quite often have real particular expertise in some of those areas and run some excellent outreach programmes. There are particular parts of the early years and nursery sector that are a higher cost—there is no getting away from that—than others.

We have put in this extra funding for the transition—for the period up to 2020—so that it is still possible to fund those above and beyond the normal base funding rates, and then for the period thereafter, as with spending overall, we have the spending review. Meanwhile, we are running analyses with outside experts to look at the particular value of maintained nurseries to help us to put together the case for what happens in future.

Q1085 **Chair:** This goes back to the original question. Would you be bidding for that extra £50 million to carry on, given the success? This is something that is really working.

Damian Hinds: To be clear, there is £1 billion more going into early years and childcare.

Q1086 **Chair:** I am talking specifically about the transitional fund for maintained



schools.

Damian Hinds: The £1 billion includes the £60 million, I think it is. Yes, we have a real commitment to early years and childcare. We have seen the gap of a good stage of development between disadvantaged pupils and the rest narrow over the last few years. That is something very much to be welcomed because being ready to learn when you get to school is so fundamental. Maintained nurseries have played an important part in that. That is why we have this work going on to build up the evidence base, if you like, for the particular contribution in maintained nurseries.

Q1087 **Chair:** Going back to Liz Truss, where she says it is often better to look at how existing money is being spent, we currently have a situation where an MP with children can get 30 hours of free childcare but a single parent in Harlow, who may not be able to work and is on low income, is only entitled to 15 hours in terms of three and four-year-olds. If you reduce the tax allowance on the 30 hours from the £100,000 threshold to £60,000 you would raise—rough arithmetic, I admit—roughly £150 million. Would it not be quite a good use to spend it on maintained schools or on getting more low-income parents to have an extra 15 hours?

Damian Hinds: I have not done that specific arithmetic but I will take your word for it on the numbers. You could do that. I think we had this conversation or a similar one last time I was here. You can set that upper income level obviously at different points and, depending on where you put it, that will have an effect on the cost of the programme.

Q1088 **Chair:** But do you agree it is—

Damian Hinds: I am still only about a third of the way through. By extension then, you do not spend that as money that is, therefore, normally available for other things.

Everybody is entitled to 15 hours for three and four-year-olds. It was 12 and a half hours under previous Governments and, of course, in previous Governments there was not the availability of 15 hours for two-year-olds, which is now available to disadvantaged two-year-olds. The 15 hours is available to everybody to specifically allow parents to work and recognising the cost of childcare, notwithstanding the fact that under Universal Credit you can be reimbursed 85% of your childcare costs, which is higher than under tax credits. Nevertheless, childcare cost is a significant line item in household budgets, so to enable parents to work there is this 30 hours provision. The rule is that you have to be earning the equivalent of 16 hours times the national living wage, so 16 hours to get 30 hours of childcare. In fact, in some circumstances it would be less than 16 hours that folk have to work. To me that seems a just way of providing that.

Q1089 **Lucy Powell:** Just briefly to follow up on the maintained nursery schools—and it was good to see that commitment of the transitional funding—there is a matter of urgency about this now. I do not think the



HOUSE OF COMMONS

timeline of the Government CSR will match the timeline of the maintained nursery schools. They are having to take decisions now about staff recruitment and other issues that are beyond 2019. Can I ask you to look at that as a matter of urgency, as the head of the CSR, because we are seeing many now under threat of closure?

Damian Hinds: I take on board what you say. This is a version of what we were talking about earlier, about forward visibility and being able to plan. Of course, I accept what you urge in terms of moving as quickly as we can, but we do have to do these analyses that I talked about and Government do run to a timetable. I agree with you that forward visibility and being able to plan is very valuable.

Lucy Powell: The challenge with the CSR that we have heard is that the previous CSR did not take account of policy changes that happened subsequent to that, whether that is in the early years, whether it is in schools, the costs that schools have to meet, or FE or whatever. That is why I think for education there is an urgency to get a settlement early because there is so much that has happened since the last CSR that has put on an extra cost burden. If you want to take that forward, you will have our full support.

Q1090 **Ian Mearns:** I am going to go off-piste somewhat, Secretary of State.

Damian Hinds: Ian, you surprise me.

Ian Mearns: When you first got the job, you announced a pause to give some stability, particularly for schools, so that there would be no more rapid change in the immediate future. An unintended consequence of that has been that some work in progress by the deafness charities on the development of a British sign language GCSE has been hit. The GCSE was in development, but now they have been told that they cannot bring it in because of this pause. We had a meeting with Nick Gibb and with the APPG on Deafness about that. It does seem like an unintended consequence. Can an exception be made, please?

Damian Hinds: I will be happy to follow up with you separately on this.

I am not promising no change, by the way, in the school system but what I said, and I think it is true, is that the pace of change in schools has been rapid. Teachers and head teachers have done an amazing job stepping up to it and implementing reforms. We have seen fantastic results in terms of the results and the narrowing of the gap between the rich and the poor, and all that is to be welcomed. What I have said is I think that we need a period of more stability. Yes, part of that is saying not having any new GCSEs introduced, over and above the ones that are already coming through the system. There are quite a lot working their way through the system.

As I say, I would be happy to follow up on this separately. It might be something that we are planning for to a slightly longer timeframe. These things do take quite a long time, by the way, anyway to bring in.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Q1091 **Ian Mearns:** The thing about this one is children are being precluded from having a GCSE qualification in their first main communication system.

Damian Hinds: I understand that and absolutely have sympathy with that argument. I totally understand the importance of it and the rightful strength of feeling that people have about it.

Q1092 **Mr William Wragg:** Going back to our first questions, I think that the approach you are adopting is one of collective responsibility in Cabinet Government, and not making your pitch for departmental spend through the newspapers. There is an element to be commended in that. I am grateful for the meeting that you attended with head teachers from my constituency to listen to their specific concerns about spending and so forth. In terms of what might be a reasonable pitch to the Treasury, for you to conduct privately obviously, things such as funding pay settlements, the increase in National Insurance and pensions would be a good place to start. Would that be something you would be willing to take forward?

Damian Hinds: I acknowledge, and I have acknowledged before, there have been cost pressures on schools. There is no getting away from that. Particularly around 2015 and 2016, some of the changes that came in contributed to that. The pension contributions, we should not forget, do go to support the teachers' pension scheme, the TPS, which is one of the best pension schemes in Europe and a big part of the proposition for teachers. It is very important.

There are other cost pressures as well, and I think we can do more to help to support schools individually and as a network on cost pressures. They may not always be exactly the same costs as the ones that have gone up in that way at that time, but at the moment we are working hard on supply agency costs, which has been a big cost item for a lot of schools, and recruitment costs. Anecdotally, when you speak to heads—I am sure some of you have had this experience as well—they talk about the very high costs of advertising vacancies.

We could do more on procurement. We have a diversity of local authorities, dioceses, multi-academy trusts and individual schools. We can do more to make our collective weight of 21,500 schools come to bear in purchasing. There was over £500 million spent last year on technology, much of which will have been well spent, but some of which won't. We can do more to help to understand what is good spend in this area and so on. There is a lot we can do.

Mr William Wragg: Thank you, I just put those ideas to you in good faith.

Q1093 **Chair:** The Careers & Enterprise Company came to our Committee recently and, to be fair, all of us pretty unanimously were quite disappointed in the responses that we received. Going back again to the Liz Truss argument about how existing monies are allocated, nearly £2



HOUSE OF COMMONS

million goes on producing think tank-type research papers. They have already spent £900,000 on that. Do you think that is money well spent or should that money be spent on the front line?

Damian Hinds: I am all in favour of spending on the front line. The heart of our career strategy, which of course the Careers & Enterprise Company is fundamental to, is about getting children to come into contact with business, to come into contact with companies, with industry, and to see the possibilities of what they may be able to do when they leave school, and then to help them to think about subject options to take and so on. Absolutely I believe in the front line.

I take very seriously this Committee's findings, its work, the investigations that you carry out, and I will pay close attention to that. I am going to be seeing the Careers & Enterprise Company in the next couple of days, and obviously we will talk about some of the things that you have raised.

Q1094 **Chair:** Are you aware that the company will only begin collecting individual outcome data on the students it works with in September 2019? That is some years after it was formed. Only 30% of careers hub criteria relate to the disadvantaged and half the £5 million disadvantaged fund is not being spent directly on disadvantaged young people. Clearly, something is not quite right.

Damian Hinds: I will talk through with them about the disadvantaged funding and targeting, and make sure that things are going where they are meant to go. Obviously, we meet with them regularly. I met with the C&EC in my last role as Minister for Employment. I know Anne Milton meets them and officials meet them regularly.

Specifically on outcomes, to be fair, there is a particular challenge when you talk about careers education and measuring outcomes of how quickly you can do it because, by definition, you are talking about things that you are doing now that might have an impact on the career that somebody takes some way off in the future. We do know that having direct contact with industry, with the world of work, is helpful to children. That in itself should give us some comfort. I know through the Enterprise Adviser Network that the C&EC is leveraging quite a lot of volunteer expertise to come into schools.

Q1095 **Chair:** Do you think it is right that the board does not publish any minutes, despite them being almost exclusively funded by you? There is no transparency. Is it right or wrong?

Damian Hinds: I have not spoken to them about that yet and that is something we will talk about. I will have to suspend judgment on that, if I may, Chairman.

Q1096 **Lucy Powell:** Just a brief follow-up on that. What was clear in our hearing with them is that they are not really sure what they are for. About a third of their activity was these enterprise advisers or whatever,



HOUSE OF COMMONS

who, by the way, are each paid about £55,000 a year, which is more than a primary head teacher.

Damian Hinds: No, no, there are many volunteers go into schools as well.

Q1097 **Lucy Powell:** Yes, but the people who co-ordinate the volunteers. That is where most of their money goes. That is about a third of their activity and it seemed to us that they have been asked to do lots of other things after that before even really establishing what that has meant, and they are unable to describe what they are for. Are they a business network organisation; are they an innovation hub that is sharing best practice; are they research and evaluation? They could not answer that question. It is not simply a point of trying to make them a little bit better at the edges, if you know what I mean. I think there is a fundamental challenge with that company.

Damian Hinds: I am clear what we are about. We have a career strategy and that is itself an important step: to be clear about what we are trying to do with careers, education and interactions with business. I am not sure there was ever a golden age. Whenever we talk about careers, we say, "It is all terrible; it was all brilliant when I was at school". Think back to when you were at school or much more recently. I am not sure that there was ever brilliance in this area, but now we have a strategy and at its heart, as you will know, are the Gatsby benchmarks. It is a good, structured way to think about this and go about it. In turn, it is about not just having academic studies and this, that and the other—

Chair: They are spending nearly £2 million on academic studies.

Damian Hinds: At its heart, it is about getting children to have meaningful encounters with the world of work throughout their secondary school lives; in fact, also on occasion in primary school. That could be very powerful from a very young age to be able to—

Q1098 **Lucy Powell:** I do not disagree with that. What we found very clearly was the majority of the activity of the company, and even that activity itself, you could not easily evaluate.

Damian Hinds: As I say, I will be taking very seriously the work of this Committee and looking carefully at what you have found. I will be discussing it also with the Careers & Enterprise Company.

Q1099 **Chair:** How much money are you planning to give them in the forthcoming settlement? They get roughly £19 million.

Damian Hinds: In the spending review settlement?

Chair: How much are you planning to allocate to the Careers & Enterprise Company over the next—

Damian Hinds: I do not have precise figures with me for that.

Q1100 **Michelle Donelan:** Just to follow up on that, the conduit between



HOUSE OF COMMONS

schools and businesses is essential because we need to challenge stereotypes, especially around STEM and in engineering, if we are going to continue to grow the economy and give these children the opportunities that they deserve. I know you talked a lot about the enterprise network, but on the ground it is not happening. We have a lot of businesses that would like to do this, but they do not know how or they do not have the time or the resource to allocate. You have schools that are stretched and it drops to the bottom of the list. That is the reality of what we have at the moment.

Damian Hinds: I recognise all that, apart from the phrase “at the moment” because that has been true for as long as I can remember. It is all correct and it is a big challenge. It would be wrong to think there is a simple answer to it, which is any particular body or any particular approach.

My experience both as Education Secretary and before when I was Minister for Employment is whenever you meet businesses they quite often have something to say about school and education in general, but particularly they say that they want young people to have more experience of the world of work. Then whenever you talk to schools about the same thing they also say they would like the kids to have more experience in the world of work, but it is difficult sometimes to bring the two things together. The Careers & Enterprise Company, the advisers network, and organisations like STEM ambassadors, can play a part in particular sectors of the economy. The food industry, for example, has a programme called Feeding Britain’s Future, which is good at introducing those sorts of careers to children at school. There is still more that we can do, in particular, to facilitate actual work experience.

Q1101 **Michelle Donelan:** That has been dropped by a number of schools now, hasn’t it?

Damian Hinds: I am not saying you are doing this, but one should not conflate the idea of a particular programme of year 10 work experience with a broader opportunity for children to have experience of the world of work. There is more we can do. I do not have the answer right now of what, but there is more we can do to try to bring together employers who are willing and keen to give more opportunities for kids to come and experience their workplace and schools who want to do it as well.

Q1102 **Michelle Donelan:** Do you agree with me that it is one of the biggest challenges given we have a massive skills gap? We have a problem in the STEM area in engineering. That is what the year of engineering is all about, at the end of the day. It is one of the biggest growing problems in this country, especially with the productivity lag as well.

Damian Hinds: Yes, Michelle, I think it is a big issue for us, and not just on STEM. STEM is very important and those are very important sectors of our economy, but in the service sector having experience of the world of work is very useful as you are coming towards getting a job. There are



HOUSE OF COMMONS

fewer young people doing paid work these days than there were a generation or two ago. People are getting their first experience of an actual job quite often later than they were, so having that opportunity to have hands-on experience in the workplace has an extra premium.

Q1103 Ian Mearns: You are quite right, Secretary of State, that there never was a golden age for careers education, advice and guidance. I chaired the Tyneside careers company that covered four local authorities. The one thing that we did, because it was mutual between four local authorities, was that every piece of surplus went back in to provide additional services for young people in our area. We knew where young people were. A failure of the current system is there does not seem to be any proper tracking to see what real outcomes are for young people. That really does need to be addressed.

Damian Hinds: As always, I welcome your expertise and experience here, which I know is very extensive. In truth, with the destinations data project and the LEO data—longitudinal educational outcomes data—there is more tracking now of the eventual destinations of young people than ever there was in the past. We can do more to help to make it intelligible, useful and useable, and then convert that into products. If you are a 14-year-old at an options evening working out what GCSEs you are going to do, that helps you to know, “What are my best options? What keeps my options quite open? If I am broadly interested in this kind of thing, what are the sorts of choices I should be making at this age to help me get there without closing off too much else?”

Q1104 Ian Mearns: One of the things that seems to have been lost in terms of imparting understanding about what career options there are for young people is the element of independent and impartial advice and guidance that used to be available from the careers companies 20 years ago. The quality does need to be there, and it was not always there. That independence and impartiality is important because we are going back to a day that Malcolm Wicks regarded was loaded with vested interest advice being given to young people. That was because of “bums on seats” funding regimes.

Damian Hinds: Yes. You are right about the value of impartial advice. It is difficult, though, to find somebody who has enough experience and breadth of the world to be able to talk about different careers and different educational paths and so on. Of course, a lot of young people’s big source of info is mum and dad. One thing we have to make sure of is that mum and dad have all the tools at their disposal and are aware of all the different options. I am particularly keen to make sure that, in school, options around apprenticeships and doing technical and vocational routes are made fully aware to kids. Anecdotally, I have seen better evidence of that these days, but I think there is still more we need to do.

Q1105 Chair: That is a good segue to the next question, briefly, on degree apprenticeships, which I think is a great Government reform and I describe them as my two favourite words in the English language. The



HOUSE OF COMMONS

expansion is very slow. We have had letters that I could quote you for the rest of the day from universities saying how difficult and bureaucratic it is. The Institute for Apprenticeships seems to want to remove the “degree” from degree apprenticeships and just call them higher apprenticeships, which the universities are very worried about, and I am as well. I think it would destroy the prestige of them. When we asked the chief executive of the IFA about degree apprenticeships, he simply said, “I am agnostic about them and I treat them the same way as any other apprenticeship”. What are you doing to encourage and push degree apprenticeships, and can we please make sure that we keep the name degree apprenticeships so that it does what it says on the tin—it is a degree apprenticeship?

Damian Hinds: I want to promote all levels of apprenticeships. I was not here to know the exact context of the use of that word “agnostic”, but I want to promote level 3 apprenticeships. I want to promote higher apprenticeships—which will be levels 4 and 5, by the way—and then also degree apprenticeships. I think all of these have a very important role. Michelle, you were talking about our productivity gap, which has been looming large since before any of us in this room was born, and we need to bear down on that, but also give more options to young people and not-so-young people. I give you my absolute commitment to degree level apprenticeships as well as to the other level apprenticeships.

Q1106 **Chair:** Just to confirm, removing the word “degree” from degree apprenticeships would be wrong?

Damian Hinds: I have no current plans to change the name of degree apprenticeships.

Q1107 **Chair:** I think your Department needs to talk to the Institute for Apprenticeships because I think they have a different view about this, according to the universities that have written to us. On the bureaucracy that the universities also face in trying to implement them, many have told me when I visit universities that they want to do a lot more but the bureaucracy and the slowness of approving the standards and so on is making things very difficult. There seems to be no huge enthusiasm from the IFA for degree apprenticeships.

Damian Hinds: I take the challenge on the speed of approval of standards. It has improved. In the last six months the rates of approval have got faster, and there is a commitment for those that are still working their way through the system to clear in short time. Obviously, operationally, we need to keep an eye on that. Based on what you have just said, I will make sure I pay particular attention to what is going on in degree level apprenticeships.

Q1108 **Thelma Walker:** Could I ask you about social justice for our most vulnerable children in terms of your thoughts on the ethics of medicating children for challenging behaviour?



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Damian Hinds: I am not a physician and I am not a pharmacist, so I have to be careful. I cannot assert a greater level of knowledge or expertise or professional competence than I have. I will always defer to the medical professionals on these questions.

Q1109 **Thelma Walker:** Recently, I met with a group of educational psychologists who expressed their deep concern at a massive increase in young children receiving prescriptions for powerful stimulant drugs. The head of Ofsted, Amanda Spielman, described the increase as a very big warning signal. We are talking about under-fives, which is going against the NICE guidelines. That is a big worry. Your thoughts on this?

Damian Hinds: I take it very seriously, but it would be wrong of me to sit here in Parliament in a Select Committee hearing and assert and suggest I have medical knowledge beyond what I do.

Q1110 **Thelma Walker:** It is happening, and there is a massive increase. I just want your thoughts on why this is happening. Why there is a massive increase?

Damian Hinds: I am not sure I can think of any different ways to word it. It would be wrong of me to make judgments on that right now. I can assure you and the Committee that I do understand that is something there is concern over.

Thelma Walker: Deep concern.

Damian Hinds: I do understand the public interest in this area, and we will, of course, take that very seriously and look into it.

Q1111 **Thelma Walker:** The University College London Institute of Education and British Psychological Society wrote, "Our biggest difficulty is that children's and adolescent mental health services and paediatric teams are so short-staffed they go straight to medication and completely ignore NICE guidance." Your thoughts on that?

Damian Hinds: I do not have a comment to make on the prescribing prevalence.

Q1112 **Thelma Walker:** No, but it is happening because of a shortage of skilled staff who can support those vulnerable children.

Damian Hinds: On the broader point about CAMHS that you mentioned and the health service more broadly, I think we all recognise that there are resource constraints in the system. There is more attention and more resourcing for mental health than there was, but there is also some combination of increased prevalence, awareness and diagnosis, and that creates strains in the system. My Department and the Health Department are putting a particular focus into the children and young people's mental health Green Paper and the various measures that are associated with that.

Q1113 **Thelma Walker:** Another group of vulnerable children to look at are



HOUSE OF COMMONS

autistic children, where there has been a 54% rise in exclusions of autistic children. That is according to Ambitious about Autism's parental survey. We then have two groups of children who are either medicated on powerful drugs if they are a problem, or excluded.

Damian Hinds: I take exclusions very seriously as well. You mention children with autism, and as you know there is an increased prevalence of exclusion for those children.

Thelma Walker: A 54% rise.

Damian Hinds: You have to look at different sources, but there is an increased prevalence for those children compared to other children. It is not universal, so there are some individual schools that have much lower rates of exclusion than others. That is one of the reasons why we have initiated a review of exclusions practice, which is chaired by Edward Timpson. That will be looking at exactly these issues and why some groups are more excluded than others—that can be ethnic groups in some cases, by the way, as well as groups with particular special needs—and also looking at better practice at those places, those schools, and those local authorities that have low levels of exclusion and maintain higher levels of inclusion.

Q1114 **Thelma Walker:** Going back to my earlier question about the medication of children, would you be willing to meet with educational psychologists and the groups who are raising this as a serious concern?

Damian Hinds: As I said before, I will pay and do pay close attention to all these issues. If there is somebody in particular that you recommend that I seek input from, I will be happy to hear from them.

Q1115 **Lucy Allan:** Is it fair to say that you would prefer to see other forms of support and intervention for young people rather than medication? I think that is the point that Thelma is making. If it is used as a first line of defence, people are not going to then look at other alternatives, such as health and support, particularly in under-fives. I understand your point about not being medically qualified, but as Secretary of State for Education you must, presumably, prefer to see support, help and other forms of intervention for young people, rather than just resorting to medication.

Damian Hinds: Of course. As a parent and as a member of society, as well as as Education Secretary, of course I want to see all these different approaches being taken. In a sense it depends how you put it. You say, "rather than just resorting to medication". Of course, I do not want to just resort to medication. Does that mean I am qualified to say that in a particular case a particular child should or should not be prescribed a medicine? No, I am not. I think it is important that we listen to the medical profession and the experts.

Q1116 **Lucy Allan:** Can I take you on to—it is a related point, in fact—public spending on children? The Children's Commissioner has just issued a



HOUSE OF COMMONS

report that was authored by the Institute for Fiscal Studies, and as part of the report the findings suggested that there is protected spending on age four-to-16 education and on statutory interventions, looked-after children, and so on. That is at the expense of targeted preventative measures. The cumulative effect is that more and more statutory interventions are taking place, not necessarily helpful or supported interventions, and less spending is going on at the more supportive end of the spending spectrum. That is almost like a self-fulfilling prophecy, where it is a vicious circle of people involved in social work having to start at the crisis end rather than the supportive end.

It does connect up to what Thelma was saying about medication. Is that a model of spend, Secretary of State, that you want to see continuing in the future, where we are just stepping in when something goes wrong with the most drastic solution, rather than trying to have a more considered approach where we are trying to prevent the need to intervene? Is that a model of spend that we are going to see continue?

Damian Hinds: You are undeniably, unarguably right that it is better, obviously, to stop a problem happening in the first place, generally, than to deal with its consequences afterwards. When we are talking about children's social care and some of the terrible consequences that can happen to children in their young lives, that is all the more important than ever.

We do have around the country, through an innovation fund, various different authorities looking at different approaches to this. I visited Grimsby the other day where they had an interesting approach, working across agencies to try to do some of the exact things you are talking about to try to stop problems happening in the first place, rather than having to pick up the pieces. Yes, I think there is a lot more we can do in thinking differently and working differently and being innovative.

Q1117 **Lucy Allan:** Yes. If we go back to the spending issue and how we spend the existing—

Damian Hinds: That is spending. That does involve spending money, clearly.

Lucy Allan: Yes, and that is a good thing. The Grimsby model you refer to is excellent. As a Department, if you are simply saying, "There is a pot of money and we have to spend on statutory intervention, and we are taking it from preventative", then you are just going to go on fuelling this problem, rather than saying, "No, hang on a minute, let's look at this". We cannot countenance having more and more and more children being taken into care. As you rightly say, that is not something you want to see.

Damian Hinds: We do not want that to happen, no.

Q1118 **Lucy Allan:** How are we going to stop it? We are not going to stop it if all social workers have to rely on as a first line of defence is, "We are going



HOUSE OF COMMONS

to intervene with a child protection measure". These measures are not helpful to families very often, and sometimes being put on a child protection register is not helping that family in any way. It is just monitoring them and scrutinising them. Yes, there are good examples, but until you say, "We are not going to spend the money in this way", that is not going to change.

I have put the same question to the Children's Minister and we did not get an answer in terms of how we are going to change the model or even if we intend this model to operate in the way that it does. There was no suggestion of, "We will review it", or, "We will look at it". I think that really has to be a first step. How do we spend public money on children in England? Unless we make the decision that we are going to physically look at what we do with the budget, we cannot change it.

Damian Hinds: I do give you that commitment to, as you put it, "physically look at" the problem. That is an ongoing issue and it is something to which this Committee may wish to return. I know this Committee has looked at it in the past; they may wish to look at it again. It is a much bigger topic than something we are going to do in a couple of sentences back and forth across these tables.

Q1119 **Lucy Allan:** I think you have given me the answer that I wanted to hear.

Damian Hinds: I would observe you do also need to spend money at the critical end and, of course, the money being spent on the most vulnerable children has increased over recent years.

Q1120 **Lucy Allan:** That is because there are more children in care and more children on child protection registers, which is not a good thing. But you did give me the answer I wanted.

Damian Hinds: That is true, but we also need to think about how we get the balance right. Sometimes it is the right decision for a child to go into care, and that is an unavoidable truth. To the extent it is possible to avoid that, then obviously for many, many reasons—chief of which is the wellbeing, development and future of the child—of course we must be constantly looking at how we can make that work.

Q1121 **Lucy Allan:** You will look at how money is spent within your budget on children who are at the crisis end relative to preventative measures? That is what the Children's Commissioner, Anne Longfield, is recommending in her report.

Damian Hinds: Yes. To be fair, I should just draw to your attention when you say "your budget", a lot of this is local authority work, but yes, we will and we do. It is not a future tense thing. We do and will continue to look closely at how we can constantly improve the way the system works.

Q1122 **James Frith:** To follow up on the exclusion point, I will bring to your attention, if you were not aware of it, the letter that Nick Gibb sent to



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Robert, our Chair: current pupils excluded or in alternative provision from mainstream stands at 15,000; 77% of those excluded or in alternative provision have SEND—special educational needs and disability; 66% of those are without EHC plans. When you consider the statistics of the schools having to give a reason, there is a slow burn, but in the last year and a half—we do not have current figures—there is an explosion of “other” being the reason that they are giving. Will you commit to asking schools to give a far more explicit reason as to why they are increasingly excluding children with special educational needs and disabilities?

Chair: Just to add to those stats, we have done some rough arithmetic again: 17 pupils with special educational needs are excluded every school day. Last year 33,000 children with statements on an education, health and care plan had a fixed-term exclusion, while 125,000 who received support for a special educational need had a fixed-term exclusion. If you add that together, that is 833 pupils every school day. I know you are going to say we have to review, but clearly there is something deeply wrong here.

Damian Hinds: Yes. I am concerned about exclusions. On permanent exclusions, I should say that the rate has gone up a little in the last couple of years, but it is lower than it was just before 2010. I still take very, very seriously fixed-term exclusions or, as we used to call them, suspensions. You are right, James, about the greater number of children with special educational needs. It is a much greater proportion than the proportion of the population represented in that group.

Yes, I am going to say we have to review. It is for these reasons that we are having a review, and I think it is right that we look at this subject in the round. On the reporting question, I do not know if Edward Timpson has that on his list of things to look at, but it is something we can certainly mention to him as well. I think that we need to consider all of these different aspects. I cannot remember whose question it was earlier but, as I say, it is not happening everywhere and it is not happening in every school. Part of the issue is to look at neighbouring areas, and where one has high rates of exclusion and one has low rates of exclusion, ask what the difference is; and within areas, it is to look at schools, and where one has high rates of exclusions and one has low, ask what the differences are.

Q1123 **Emma Hardy:** This is heading to early intervention and the importance of that. One of the countries I have been reading about recently is Estonia. At the age of three, they do speech, language and communication checks on every single child and introduce early intervention for any children showing any difficulties with speech, language and education. By the time they start school, they are not starting school much further behind. I was talking just last night to a speech and language therapist who was saying that if you can make a difference before a child is five, they are over 50% more likely to catch up with their peers in terms of their speech, language and communication. She said she sees pupils at the age of four and a half



HOUSE OF COMMONS

when they start school, so she is expected to make all the difference within only six months.

Surely it seems obvious to everybody that if we started making this difference at the age of three, these children could catch up. It is not just about the word gap. I do not like it when the Department keeps talking about the word gap. It is not; it is conversational turn taking as well that is being seen as crucially important. Speech and language importance is not just about communication, it is also about, as James was just alluding to, the number of children in our PRUs and in our alternative provision that have communication difficulties, which will affect, of course, their behaviour and their cognitive development.

I feel quite passionate about this and that the Department for Education are not giving oracy and speech, language and communication the importance that it needs. I hope that you are going to be the man to change that.

Damian Hinds: Apart from the bit about the DfE not putting enough emphasis, I agree with you. I have written stuff about this in the past, before I was doing this job, about the absolutely crucial importance of years zero to five in a child's life and how it is by far the greatest point of leverage on children's development, on social ability, on social justice and on educational attainment. Pretty much everything you said I would agree with.

The point about the word gap is there is a lot of positive correlation between a lot of these measures. If you are quite high on one, you tend to be quite high on the others as well. Word gap is easier to measure than some of the others, and it is perhaps easier for people to get their heads around, so I think it is a useful measure but, of course, it is not the only thing. It is also about pro-social behaviours and all sorts of other things that you mentioned or alluded to.

The provision of early years education, with the 15 hours a week for disadvantaged two-year-olds, is an important part of this. If there are 163,000 children benefiting from that programme who did not have that opportunity in the past.

Q1124 **Emma Hardy:** Could they have a statutory check as they do in Estonia at three years old? I think that would make such a difference. At the moment they are only picking up on the problem when they start school at four and a half. If every child was checked for speech and language communication at the age of three with the free childcare that is being offered—

Damian Hinds: We have the early years foundation stage system, and we have almost universal take-up of the 15 hours of free early years education for three and four-year-olds, more of whom are now in nurseries and settings rated good or outstanding. A lot of this infrastructure is in place. You have 160,000 two-year-olds benefiting



HOUSE OF COMMONS

from early years education that was never available under any previous Government. These are all positive things to be welcomed.

There is one more really important part of this jigsaw, and that is what happens at home. It is relatively easier to think about what happens in nursery or what happens in school and so on, but what happens at home makes a big, big, big difference, and it is very, very hard, for lots of reasons, for public policy to go there. I feel I have been contributing to your forward scheme of works—I am not trying to do that—but this Committee might like to look at that at some point. Helping, facilitating, and enabling the home learning environment can have a really beneficial impact on educational outcome and a massive impact on social justice.

Q1125 Emma Hardy: You are saying that the infrastructure is there, the foundation stage curriculum is there, and you have this outstanding nursery provision, but they do not appear to be fundamentally making those checks on speech, language and communication and bringing in that early intervention. Maybe it needs an emphasis from the Department to say how important it is that this is looked at. I do not believe it is given the same level of importance as it is in terms of numeracy and literacy, yet we know that it is of crucial importance to a child's entire life. Therefore, if the Department is able to say, "This really matters. This is really important", it might make a difference.

Damian Hinds: Okay; got it.

Q1126 Michelle Donelan: In terms of the infrastructure already being there in the 15 hours, they sometimes pick up on it. When they do pick up on it, then they will alert the parent and the onus is on the parent to go and acquire the help. There is no formal process to get the help for them, or to instigate it, or to make it compulsory even. You are then relying on the parent doing it and them engaging in the process. Secondly, I think that we have to be really careful that we do not always associate speech and language problems with deprivation or with a lack of engaged parents at home, because it can happen to the children of teachers, who are really engaged with their children.

Damian Hinds: Absolutely. I agree with you about all that. With a lot of these issues there is over-indexing. Colleagues will know it does vary in the extent to which it occurs in different socioeconomic groupings, different regions, and so on. You are absolutely right: these issues can happen to anybody. You are also absolutely right, Michelle, in identifying the importance of support for parents.

Q1127 Chair: Just before I pass over to Lucy Powell, can I go back to SEND? An investigation by the *Times Educational Supplement* found that for looked-after children it can take almost a year to be accepted by mainstream schools. Almost a tenth of applications for in-year school admissions are not accepted within the statutory framework of 20 working days, and applications to non-maintained schools are half as likely to be accepted within the deadline as those to maintained schools. What is your view



HOUSE OF COMMONS

about why schools are deliberately blocking access to some of our most vulnerable pupils?

Damian Hinds: We need to work harder at this. You are not going to find me defending, and saying everything is fine with, the educational outcomes for looked-after children.

Q1128 **Chair:** Why not measure school performance to help change schools' behaviour by rewarding them for taking on pupils with more complex needs?

Damian Hinds: All these things I will consider. It is good to get the Committee's input on that. We do have now a virtual head system for looked-after children, and we do have the pupil premium plus. I think those two are very important structural reforms to help looked-after children. As I say, we must do better. We have seen a narrowing of the attainment gap overall, a very welcome narrowing of the attainment gap—10% in both primary and secondary school—but not enough has been achieved for looked-after children, and we need to work harder.

Q1129 **Lucy Powell:** I have just a few questions about accountability, which I think flows from some of that conversation about exclusion. You will have seen in the *Times* this week that Ofsted found that 19,000 children were off-rolled or excluded just before their GCSEs, and only half of those re-emerged anywhere else on the register. My question is: in the fragmented school system with RSCs, Ofsted, EFSA—

Damian Hinds: You say fragmented; I say diverse. Go on.

Lucy Powell: Where there is lots of jostling for who is going to hold a school to account and so on, whose responsibility is it to look after the children?

Damian Hinds: Ultimately, it is my responsibility. I am the Secretary of State for Education and everybody who works in the system shares in that. Head teachers run schools, multi-academy trusts run trusts, local authorities run local authorities, and I have overall responsibility for the education system.

Q1130 **Lucy Powell:** But whose job is it to make sure a child is educated?

Damian Hinds: All of those people.

Lucy Powell: But none of them are at the moment. If a child is excluded—

Damian Hinds: A bit of a generalisation, I think.

Q1131 **Lucy Powell:** Okay, but for an excluded child, whose job is it to make sure that child is getting a good education, whether that is now being done at home, whether it is being done in AP or whether it is being done elsewhere? Whose job is that?



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Damian Hinds: I want to see fewer children being excluded, and we talked about this a little earlier. As I said then, it is not happening everywhere. There are some places, some individual schools where there is a greater incidence than others, and we need to work out what the differences are between those different types of school and how we can learn from best practice. I think I know where you are going with the question but go on.

Q1132 **Lucy Powell:** My point is that if a school decides to exclude a child and that is an academy school, and there are other academy schools in the area who do not want to take that child, nobody can do anything about that. My assertion is that that is one of the reasons we are seeing such a rise in exclusions.

Damian Hinds: First, in permanent exclusions, as I mentioned before, there has been an increase, but it is below the peak that there was. I want to get that number down. We have Edward Timpson looking into this subject in the round. He will report back and I will respond.

Q1133 **Lucy Powell:** Is part of his remit to look at fair access protocols and in-year transfers and so on?

Damian Hinds: I do not have in front of me the exact terms of reference, but I think he can look broadly at the subject.

Q1134 **Lucy Powell:** I think that he should because this is part of the challenge. In the past it used to be the local authorities who had responsibility for all the children in an area, but they have no powers to make a school take a child anymore and that is a big part of this driver, I would suggest. I welcome your recent policy, your principles for a clear and simple accountability system, because I think that there are some improvements there. What do you see as being the role of an RSC and all their associated staff?

Damian Hinds: I made this simple statement at the NAHT conference, "Inspectors inspect; commissioners commission". The body we have for inspecting schools is Ofsted and they come with their range of one of four judgments, and if you are judged inadequate then we have to take structural change action for that school.

Regional schools commissioners are not there to inspect schools and form judgments in that way; they are there to make sure that when a school needs to go into a multi-academy trust or needs to move from one to another, that process is facilitated. Part of that is to analyse and to assess which trusts have the capacity to grow, to take on more schools, and the appropriate speed at which they do that. We have learned from this process as the system has developed over the last few years.

Q1135 **Lucy Powell:** Their job is mainly to broker schools to become academies. That is their job.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Damian Hinds: To broker them, to re-broker them when needed and to assess the receiving trusts as well.

Q1136 **Lucy Powell:** But their role is not a school improvement job?

Damian Hinds: I am hesitant in answering the question because I see the entirety of the Department for Education as being a school improvement job. All of us are engaged and everything we do is about improving education and care for children and young people and some adults as well. We are all engaged in that, but there are different roles we bring to that process, particularly for the regional schools commissioner organisation. Their primary purpose is to make sure that schools are allied with the most appropriate trust.

Q1137 **Lucy Powell:** With that in mind, I do not know if you saw the EPI report last week that found there was no difference between whether a school was in a local authority or whether it was an academy in relation to its performance. Some of the best schools are in local authority control. Some of them are in MATs. Some of the worst—in fact, one of the worst is Bright Tribe—are academy chains and some others. If we are going to follow the evidence, as your document says we are going to do, and significant change must only be done on the soundest possible evidence, is it not now time to give RSCs or whoever the powers to re-broker schools where necessary back to a local authority?

Damian Hinds: I pay tribute to maintained schools, as I do to academies and free schools. There are many, many excellent maintained schools in the country run by outstanding heads, peopled by outstanding staff. By the way, many great people are working in local authorities as well. I pay tribute to those as well.

Q1138 **Lucy Powell:** Absolutely. The question is, then, why can't you re-broker them back that way?

Damian Hinds: I think one has to be careful, though, picking off the shelf a single study into anything in this line of work.

Q1139 **Lucy Powell:** But it is not the only study. There is no evidence at all that says academisation in and of itself leads to school improvement.

Damian Hinds: If you look at the evidence with sponsored academies and the rate of improvement and those that have gone on to be good or outstanding schools, I would contend there is that evidence and there are many schools that are thriving as a result and many children in those schools benefiting as a result. I think that the process of school autonomy has been a good one and, by the way, the direction of travel predates the change of Government.

Q1140 **Lucy Powell:** It probably leads to a lot more exclusion.

Damian Hinds: I am a little surprised to hear you arguing against school autonomy in that way.



Q1141 Lucy Powell: I am not arguing against school autonomy at all. I am saying that given you now have a real capacity issue in terms of the number of good multi-academy trusts that can take on schools, we are being left with a high number of orphan schools, so to speak, which are “requires improvement” or “inadequate” with no potential sponsor—and we still have two that were left from the WCAT breakdown, for example, and many others—so why is it that a whole armoury of the DfE, i.e. the regional schools commissioners, only have the remit to re-broker to become academies, instead of looking at the whole range of school improvement partners available, of which local authorities are one?

Damian Hinds: I will come to that in a second, but I just wanted to finish the point I was making about academies. I was going on to say I think that multi-academy trusts are also a great positive force. You share costs, you share expertise, you share best practice. For teachers’ career paths as well, it can be and is a very positive thing, overwhelmingly.

Lucy Powell: The good ones, yes, but there are lots of not good ones.

Damian Hinds: That is not to say there have never been problems. You mentioned WCAT and you mentioned Bright Tribe, and these have been very, very difficult cases for the families concerned. You also have to see that in this context: it is not the case that before we had multi-academy trusts and we only had local authorities—back in the day—some terrible problems did not happen then as well. I want to make sure that we have a very rich diversity in our school system, including strong multi-academy trusts and many of them, and to build up the capacity, particularly of the very good ones, to be able to take on more schools. We have a better framework these days for doing that, a better framework for managing the pace of expansion, for bringing in more expertise. There is the MAT development fund.

Q1142 Lucy Powell: But getting back to the point about local authorities—

Damian Hinds: This is the point.

Lucy Powell: The point is a few years ago when there was a big expansion of academies it was almost a free-for-all, and that is partly what led to the challenges we are now seeing with the collapse and the fraudulent activity and so on of some. I think that now we have almost gone the whole other way in that there are so few preferred providers who are willing to take on new schools and we have a major capacity problem. Not just capacity, but it may lead to other problems when you only have a small pool of preferred providers.

My simple question, therefore, is: why cannot local authorities also be one of those preferred providers given they have a good track record of improving schools and working with schools, and have financial credibility and all the systems in place? Why can’t they be?

Damian Hinds: It is perfectly possible to create new multi-academy trusts but we do have—



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Lucy Powell: Just tell me why a local authority can't.

Damian Hinds: We have a system that works well where multi-academy trusts bring something very important to our school system.

Q1143 **Lucy Powell:** The good ones, and there are fewer and fewer good ones now who are prepared to take on schools.

Damian Hinds: No, Lucy, there are not fewer and fewer good ones. There are many good multi-academy trusts.

Q1144 **Lucy Powell:** I said there are fewer and fewer who were prepared to take on other schools.

Damian Hinds: They do bring something very important to the system in that they innovate but also in the way of sharing expertise, sharing back office functions and sharing administration.

Q1145 **Lucy Powell:** No one disagrees with that. I was just asking you a very simple question and you have still not answered it.

Damian Hinds: The question is: why can't you re-broker to local authorities? The answer is because we think school autonomy is a good thing. We think multi-academy trusts are a positive force, so the challenge is to find the right trust to re-broker when you need to re-broker a school. Of course, we hope you are not needing to re-broker schools in that way, but when you do need to do it, it is important that you do it in the right way for the interests of the children and then to find the right multi-academy trust to re-broker it.

Q1146 **Ian Mearns:** Would you preclude local authorities from setting up their own MATs?

Damian Hinds: Ian, there is a set of rules that I do not have in front of me right now, but I think for people who have been involved in education it is an entirely legitimate thing to say they would set up a multi-academy trust. That is separate, that is different from being a local authority.

Q1147 **Lucy Powell:** Finally on this point, we had the NAO in recently about resources to Ofsted and so on. Given that Ofsted's role is to inspect schools, that is a central role and very resource-heavy, and RSCs have quite a narrow role that seems to be just to put academies with other academies in a non-transparent way. What do you think the relative staffing of those two organisations should be in relation to state schools—Ofsted versus RSCs? Would you be surprised to know that the RSCs have twice as many staff as Ofsted do supporting state schools?

Damian Hinds: I do not have in mind a staff ratio, an ideal staff ratio.

Q1148 **Lucy Powell:** Is that a surprise to you that RSCs have 580 staff and Ofsted has 245?

Damian Hinds: I think that it is important that both organisations are able to carry out their functions, of course.



Q1149 **Lucy Powell:** I would suggest to you, if you do not have this opinion, that the RSCs have absolutely ballooned and mushroomed and Ofsted, as we have heard from the NAO, is being starved of resources that it needs to do that school improvement work that it does. That is just my thought.

Damian Hinds: Of course, we keep all of these things under review and that is right to do so. I think that Ofsted's budget is about £40 million and activity is targeted to put most resource towards the areas that have most concern.

Q1150 **Lucy Powell:** The £40 million is not for schools, though. That is for early years children's services.

Damian Hinds: I think that it is a good thing that we have seen more schools getting better judgments. This is all to be welcomed but, of course, we have to keep these things constantly reviewed.

Chair: I will just ask gently for slightly more concise answers. A quick one from Emma.

Q1151 **Emma Hardy:** Further to the points Lucy has been making about why we cannot allow local authorities to re-broker schools, there has been an extortionate amount of money wasted by the constant re-brokering of some schools. I will not list all these figures, but taxpayers picked up a bill of £1.5 million in funding grants for re-brokering schools away from the E-ACT chain in 2014-15; over £1 million was spent on funding grants to re-broker schools out of the CfBT Schools Trust between 2014 and 2017; funding grants of over £600,000 were paid to re-broker from the AET—I could go on. I have a full page of millions of pounds of taxpayers' money being spent re-brokering schools more than once. This is not the first time they have been re-brokered. These are schools having to be re-brokered more than once. It seems to me that this refusal to allow schools to be re-brokered to the local authority is not about saving money. It is about ideology, and I ask you as the new Secretary of State to rethink the dogma of the past and look at what is the best solution for the children in that area, which might be a high-performing local authority, and not to rule it out.

Damian Hinds: The Chairman asked me to give brief answers so, yes, I will commit that absolutely we will do these things with the best interests of the children at heart.

Q1152 **Emma Hardy:** And look again at allowing schools to be re-brokered into good local authorities?

Damian Hinds: To give you a full answer on this would not be a straightforward answer or a one simple sentence. The sums of money you are talking about are to make sure there is a sustainable settlement with the receiving trust if there have been financial problems at the school. The alternative to not spending that money—I am not sure you are recommending not spending that money, which would be a surprising—



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Q1153 Emma Hardy: Schools have been re-brokered more than once at huge cost to the taxpayer and a solution to this could be allowing local authorities to take back schools. Look at the WCAT ones.

Damian Hinds: I am not sure how that would work.

Q1154 Trudy Harrison: Secretary of State, this is following on from Lucy's point on Ofsted. Leadership and management continues to be an important part of the Ofsted inspection framework. Do you feel that multi-academy trusts should be inspected by Ofsted?

Damian Hinds: I have said publicly that our system has evolved, as we have just been discussing. Multi-academy trusts have a much bigger role in the system than they did a few years ago, and I think it is right that as a system evolves and changes there are times when you take stock and think about transparency and accountability and all those things that go with how they are working.

I think that it is a legitimate question with multi-academy trusts to want a way to assess, and to be clear to parents and others about, the effectiveness of different multi-academy trusts and the value, because there is some pooling of resources from the individual schools in the trust to fund some central functions. They are not the same central functions in every multi-academy trust. They do different things. As I say, I think that it is legitimate—more than legitimate, I think that it is important—to be able to know, for parents and for others, what the effect and the value of the different multi-academy trusts is.

As to how you do that, I think that it would be wrong to come to an immediate decision, so I have said I will work with the sector to understand what the best way to go about it is, and which body or bodies are required and are best placed to make those assessments.

Q1155 Trudy Harrison: Do you feel at the moment that transparency with multi-academy trusts is present?

Damian Hinds: There is quite a lot of transparency in terms of the finances and so on. Various things need to be disclosed.

Q1156 Trudy Harrison: It is that point that I would like to have your thoughts on because the finances of the multi-academy trust that concerns me the most, Bright Tribe, are not transparent and the parents have had to become part-time detectives in finding out the amount of money that is spent every month.

With a 9% top-slice of £10,000 a month on IT, the nuclear industry is stepping in to provide the school with computers because it does not have a suitable IT system. There is £36,000 a month on the estate. I know you have not visited Whitehaven Academy yet, but it is appalling. There are window frames that are rotten. The Health and Safety Executive has instructed that these windows must now be nailed shut meaning there is no ventilation in the school. The radiators were



HOUSE OF COMMONS

permanently on. Teachers and students were in classrooms with temperatures in excess of 36° a couple of weeks ago. It was the nuclear industry that stepped in because Bright Tribe absolutely failed in their duty to provide a fit-for-purpose building.

That is just one school. They have other schools. They were given, I believe, about £1 million to create a northern hub, a suite of excellence, but from our understanding that money has just gone on senior leadership wages. Where is the transparency for parents to hold multi-academy trusts to account?

Damian Hinds: First, Trudy, on the specific issue of Whitehaven and Bright Tribe—of course, you and I have had an opportunity to discuss it previously—it has been a terrible case for the parents concerned and for everybody in the local community. The four northern Bright Tribe academies are going to be re-brokered, as you know, and officials from the Department are also working with the school on some of these immediate-term issues. It is important that we learn lessons from Whitehaven and Bright Tribe, and other colleagues may be about to bring up other cases. We need to learn from all of these.

That is in the particular. Then, in the broader and in the general, this is exactly what I am talking about when I say I think, as the system has evolved, it is right that you stop and think about how the system works and the transparency that you need, including the ability, as you rightly say, for parents and the community and others to assess effectiveness and value. You mentioned salaries and specifically on—

Q1157 Trudy Harrison: Do you know how much the chief executive of Bright Tribe gets paid?

Damian Hinds: Off the top of my head, Trudy, I do not know how much the chief executive of Bright Tribe gets paid, but I do know that there is legitimate concern over some high salaries. It is a relatively small number of people, let us be clear about that. But there is high pay and ultimately this is public money. I think that if you are going to earn more than the Prime Minister, then that should be for exceptional circumstances managing a very large and complex organisation.

We are going to require disclosure in the future of high pay arrangements and my colleague Lord Agnew, the Minister concerned, is also in one-to-one conversation with a number of the trusts who do have particularly highly paid people, and in some cases he has reached agreement with them to stop paying those amounts of money. As I say, ultimately this is public money. There is a legitimate public interest in how it gets spent, but I want to move to a more generalised system and this is what I am talking about.

I want to have these consultations, these discussions with the sector in order to do it right, to work out what system we need and what body or bodies need to be involved in making judgments on multi-academy trusts in relation both to their effectiveness—because their educational



HOUSE OF COMMONS

effectiveness is very important—and what they bring to that, but also financial stability, probity and so on. All these things are very important.

Q1158 Trudy Harrison: Can I just follow on? I am really pleased to hear that there will be this in-depth review of lessons learned, but where it is discovered that public money has been misspent—hundreds of thousands of pounds, if not millions of pounds, on one school alone—what do you have in place to ensure that money goes back to the school, to the students where it should have gone in the first place?

Damian Hinds: Trusts cannot take money with them after dissolving. They cannot then take money with them. There would be a fair disbursement of funds across the schools in the trust where that is the case.

Q1159 Trudy Harrison: If money has been misspent, if work has been invoiced for and was never carried out, if work was carried out but it was to a particularly poor standard, is there a system in place other than the criminal system—that would seem the obvious one to me—of ensuring that public money goes back, because God forbid if an MP was to misspend their budget? We are talking about millions of pounds, and in the last hour we have discussed how we want money to be spent on special educational needs, on career support, on childcare, on early intervention. Here we have millions of pounds being misspent. What can be done to ensure that money is clawed back and put where it should be in schools?

Damian Hinds: I think the question you have just asked is a slightly different one from the one I had just answered. I was talking about where there is money in the account when a trust ceases to operate. As for criminal activity, of course, you are right about the appropriate prosecuting authorities. Obviously, we want these issues not to happen in the first place, and transparency and this assessment and so on I talked about will be part of that.

I did not mention related party transactions, and I think this is important as well. Related party transactions, by the way, can be legitimate and it is very important to say that. But I think it is right that there is transparency and it is clear where money is going, so we are going to have a rule that they have to be disclosed and over a certain level will need to be approved. I think that is also an important part of the overall probity.

Chair: Can we move on now to teacher recruitment and retention?

Q1160 Emma Hardy: You might have seen that *Tes* has recently launched a campaign called Let Them Teach, which is a campaign exposing how non-EU foreign teachers have been unable to obtain visas and how many of them are being sent back to their countries and leaving, which is fuelling the recruitment crisis. They are saying heads are being prevented from hiring talented teachers from abroad. They were already finding it impossible to fill vacancies and some teachers are having difficulties



HOUSE OF COMMONS

getting their visas renewed. I wondered what your thoughts were on that and whether you have been in touch with the Home Office to discuss this problem because this is contributing to the recruitment crisis that we are currently facing.

Damian Hinds: I welcome what is happening on taking NHS doctors and nurses out of the tier 2 visa cap because that creates more space for other professions and that, of course, includes teachers. There are also some subjects on the shortage occupation list that, therefore, have special treatment anyway and, of course, EU nationals are not affected by this. This is only for recruitment from outside the EU.

There have not been that many times when the cap has been hit, and I do not think that it would be right to think that a large part of the recruitment challenge that we have is to do with this area. But it is the case that the changes that come in on 6 July will create more headroom for the teaching profession.

Q1161 **Emma Hardy:** Currently, only teachers in four subjects—maths, physics, computer science and Mandarin—are on the shortage list, but it is not just about fuelling the recruitment crisis. It is also, as you can imagine, for children very disruptive to their learning if their teacher has to leave part way through the year because they cannot get their visa renewed when they have already potentially been teaching in that school for a number of years. It is very unfair and surely that should be something you should talk to the Home Office about. For people who are coming to our country and working here, teaching our children, something should be done about getting them the visas that they need.

Damian Hinds: We have talked about it and there are changes coming in that will relieve the pressure on the cap.

Q1162 **Thelma Walker:** What about all teachers being on the shortage occupation list?

Damian Hinds: We have a system. We have the Migration Advisory Committee that advises Government on shortage areas in the economy and on general issues around immigration and the economy.

Q1163 **Thelma Walker:** But we are 8,000 primary teachers short. They are not on the list.

Damian Hinds: Thelma, yes, but you have to think about where teachers come from to fill those vacancies, and we do not do very much recruitment from abroad. British schools do not recruit that much from EU countries, let alone countries outside the EU. We do need more people to apply for teacher training but, as I was saying to Emma, although, of course, with individual cases it is distressing and I understand that, the changes coming at the start of July will make a material difference because it will increase the headroom in the tier 2 category. But for filling those vacancies in teacher training, getting people into teaching, getting them to come back to teaching and so on, our challenge lies somewhere else.



Q1164 Emma Hardy: Thinking about teacher recruitment and retention in general, a recent survey done by the Teacher Tap showed that given the choice of working fewer days, 47% of teachers would prefer to work only four days and take a drop in salary. If 47% of our teachers were suddenly able to work four days, we would need an extra 40,000 teachers. What will happen if those 40,000 teachers decided they only wanted to work four days?

Damian Hinds: Is this a complex maths problem you are trying to pose me?

Emma Hardy: Absolutely. You can imagine the difficulty we are facing. What affected me was that the reason they gave for wanting to work four days was not because they didn't enjoy the job, but because they wanted to have some kind of work/life balance and they felt that working full time they could not have a work/life balance. When they were saying, "I want one day off to spend time with my children, or do something for my home"—these are things they are unable to do at the weekend because of the amount of time that they are spending doing work—surely you would agree that teachers should be able to work full time and have some kind of work/life balance. What is the Department doing about that?

Damian Hinds: Gosh, once again, Emma, I find myself in a very high level of agreement with what you say. This challenge around flexible working is big. It is big in all sectors but there is a strangely low incidence of flexible working in teaching. Many people would think the opposite would be true but that is the case and we need to work harder at it.

I met a head teacher the other day who said 80% timetabling is the new 100% timetabling, which is to say that more and more people are requiring and needing that arrangement to be able to work. Quite often it is not to take off a day a week, as it were; it is to do school drop-off and pick-up for their own children and making the timetable fit with that. We need to do more. There is some resistance in some parts of the sector. You get some people saying, "It is very difficult to do flexible working patterns because of the requirements of timetabling and so on". If I am honest, it is usually men that say that. Women heads that I have spoken to have invariably said, "No, there are ways you can make it work, job shares in particular".

Chair: I appreciate it was a long question and a long answer, but we need to be much more concise. We have a lot to go through still.

Q1165 Thelma Walker: Taking that further in terms of the problems, we are in crisis, as *Tes* in their letter to you has pointed out, with the recruitment of teachers: 39,000 have left the profession over the last couple of years. There was a social media post that I thought was really quite sad from a teacher: "It is not that there are not enough teachers, they just don't want to teach in a regime this Government have created". Having been in



HOUSE OF COMMONS

the profession myself for 34 years, from a young teacher, the idea that morale is so low that people who have trained and committed to a profession to work with children and young people are quitting in droves, in thousands. How do we address this? How do we improve that morale? How do we make teachers regain that joy of teaching and learning?

Damian Hinds: I take the morale of the teaching profession exceptionally seriously and I know that workload is a particular concern. It is not a new concern. I was looking back the other day at survey responses from teachers going back 20 years or so and workload has always been right up there. I spent a week in a school just before the 2010 election. The number one thing people talked about in the staff room was workload. When one says, "the regime of this Government", I think one has to be a little—hang on, I am short of time—careful about ascribing things purely in that way.

I do take it very seriously and I am committed to and will do everything we can to help bear down on it. I do not have time to go through it properly; it is a complex problem. It is not only about things that are happening from Government. I would also just mention that we also have 450,000 teachers in our schools and the number of teachers since 2010 has gone up. Retention I have paid very close attention to as well. It has stayed broadly stable over the last couple of decades. I want to work harder and to—

Q1166 **Thelma Walker:** It is a really difficult job. Can I just put it to you that it has always been a difficult job, but if people believe in what they are doing, are committed to what they are doing, they will stay?

Damian Hinds: I agree with that. I needed to link it, though, to Emma's question earlier because to help people to be able to stay in the profession, or to be able to return to the profession, we also need to really work on this point about flexible working.

Q1167 **Ian Mearns:** On your appointment, Secretary of State, I was very heartened to hear you mention that you felt that the recruitment and retention crisis was something that needed to be addressed. You actually used the word "crisis", and that was welcomed because we had been saying that there had been this crisis for a while. I am afraid the Ministers within the Department seemed to be in denial about that before your appointment.

In 2016-17 the DfE spent only £35.7 million on programmes for teacher development and retention, of which only £91,000 was particularly targeted at improving teacher retention. There really is something that needs to be done on retention because we are quite clearly seeing teachers leaving the profession, particularly initially in their early time or after five to seven years. There is a growing trend of teachers leaving the profession, or sometimes not leaving the teaching profession but leaving the state education system to go and work elsewhere. We do need to do something about retention.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

I would also be interested to ask you quickly about how the portal on recruitment is working that you have established in the north-east and Cambridgeshire.

Damian Hinds: First, let me say our recruitment gap has narrowed, I am pleased to be able to say. We still have a lot more to do. You are right, Ian, on retention, that we need to work constantly at that and it is not just about people leaving the profession altogether, it is partly about leaving to work in private schools or abroad, which does happen as well.

We know from the surveys that the number one issue is workload, and the number of hours worked on average per week by school teachers is too high. It is as simple as that. We need to bring it down. What I was trying to just get on to with Thelma—we will not be able to do the subject justice today—is it is a complex problem, and the more you look at it the more you realise there are not simple things you can do. There is not the form that you can say, “If we did not make people fill in this form that would reduce 20 minutes a week”. It is much more endemic than that and we need to redouble our efforts at it.

Sorry, just remind me what your other—

Ian Mearns: The portal.

Damian Hinds: The portal. It is very early days. This is a new service, a teacher vacancy service modelled on or inspired by NHS jobs. Eventually, if you are interested in getting into being a teacher or moving jobs, there will be a single place to go to. It has only just started but it is operational, as you say, in those pilot areas.

Q1168 **Ian Mearns:** The number of jobs being advertised on it is very small.

Damian Hinds: It is quite small, yes.

Q1169 **Ian Mearns:** For instance, TeachVac, which is an independent one and is free, in the last 12 months advertised something like 60,000 jobs and it is a free service.

Damian Hinds: Yes. Look, there is a bit of a build-up thing here. There is always a bit of a chicken and egg question with these services because how you get a lot of vacancies advertised is by having a lot of people looking for the vacancies. How you get a lot of people looking for the vacancies is by having a lot of vacancies. We need to try to build that up.

Q1170 **Ian Mearns:** I know it was early days, but evidence that I have from the north-east was that nobody knew about it.

Damian Hinds: Okay, thank you for that feedback.

Q1171 **Ian Mearns:** On the £91,000 point, that does need to be addressed. If you have a £35 million budget—this was a couple of years ago—on recruitment and retention and only £91,000 of that was aimed at retention, that needs to be rebalanced.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Damian Hinds: I do not think retention is all about spending money. It is about making sure that the career paths are there, that the career development is there, that the workload is manageable and, as I say, flexible working options are there when they are needed.

Q1172 **Ian Mearns:** CPD though? The DfE could do a lot more on that, I think.

Damian Hinds: I don't think you have included that in your £91,000, Ian. Clearly there is more. We have been looking into QTS and also the longer run of career development, professional development and, yes, I agree with you, these are all things we need to look at.

Chair: We are going to jump ahead and if there is time we will come back to the schools that work for everyone, but I want to get James in on T levels and further education.

Q1173 **James Frith:** I am hoping that we are going to hear the grand plan this morning about T levels, since you are the first Secretary of State to ever issue ministerial direction. Since 1990, only 66 ministerial directions have been issued, none of them from the Department for Education. What buoyant confidence do you have that overrules your permanent secretary? Please let's get to some understanding of practical appreciation and avoid the grandstanding and platitudes about parity of esteem, which we all principally sign up to, Secretary of State.

Damian Hinds: I don't think parity of esteem is a platitude; it is an important thing to strive for. T levels, alongside apprenticeships, are a generational opportunity to properly reform our technical and vocational education and training. There are many parts of our education system that can genuinely be described as world class, but when we talk about the generality of technical vocation in this country and you compare it to the world's leading systems, we have a gap and we need to fill it. In designing T levels—and in designing the higher quality apprenticeships—that is what informs Ministers and the Department. Having more learning hours is at the heart of it in T levels. Meaningful industrial placements to be engaging with industry, with work, the extended projects, English, maths and digital skills—this is all absolutely fundamental. We owe it to young people that these high-quality opportunities are there.

James Frith: Yes, absolutely, I agree with that.

Damian Hinds: You asked for a grand plan, and you gave me 90 seconds for a grand plan.

Q1174 **James Frith:** I also asked for some practical evidence. Let me put it to you that some of the practical concerns in the sector include focus around work placements. What will be the plan in a rural or coastal community where a college is offering T levels but the local economy cannot support the number of placements needed? Second to that, if a T level is specific to one sector, that will be heavily reliant on work placements from that sector providing the majority of those work placements. Appreciating the support there is for the principal argument, help us understand how those



HOUSE OF COMMONS

employer placements are going to support that ambition when, for example, BT's involves a 12-week induction programme for any person coming into their work placement, which is more than the 60-day maximum work placement that you are presenting as a core feature of this T level.

Damian Hinds: We are starting on industrial placement pilots now precisely to make sure that it is possible to build up the availability and to address some of these issues that you rightly mention, some of the particular challenges in rural areas, but we have to do it. If you are serious—and I am—about thorough reform of technical and vocational educational training it includes industrial placements, so we will find ways to do it.

In terms of the quantum of placements available in different industries, the numbers of young people we want coming through doing T levels will be in some proportion to the size of those industries and the requirements that they have for people coming into them. We need to make sure that the opportunities are there. I have met some of the first 54 colleges who will be doing the first three T level courses from 2020. We were talking about how they are going and how they are currently thinking about industrial placements. There was some thinking about how, for example, if companies have apprentices four days a week and then they do their day a week at college, you could do the reverse sometimes for T level students. Some employers in the digital sector were thinking about how they, on their own, may be too small to take industrial placements but how they can club together to make those opportunities. I know some of the mayors, the combined authorities, are interested in thinking about how they can convene sectors together. We have to have the will and the drive to make this happen. If we are going to have world-class technical and vocational educational training it includes industrial placements.

Q1175 **James Frith:** I agree. I just do not know that—having read a lot of the information your Department puts out on these things—there is a plan for the number and type of students you would design as the customer or custodian of these T levels. Could you give me a sense of who you expect to take T levels and who the T levels are for?

Damian Hinds: They are mainly for 16 to 18-year-olds. They are for young people who want to take a more technical vocational route. It is not necessarily a decision you are making forever. This is probably a 10-year roll-out programme altogether, essentially of the principles and strategy in the Sainsbury report. It includes saying there should be opportunities for bridging between the T level and when some young people may want to go to university and others to higher level, level 4 and 5 apprenticeships, degree level apprenticeships, and so on. There should be those opportunities to move.

Q1176 **James Frith:** Why would you not take an apprenticeship if that was where you were at? Why are you not investing in that?



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Damian Hinds: You might do.

Q1177 **James Frith:** Why offer what is felt as a—

Damian Hinds: Why did you do French rather than Spanish? People make different choices.

Q1178 **James Frith:** That is true. I do not think I did either actually.

There is a concern that rather than investing in apprenticeships you are diluting them with this well-meaning bid for parity of scheme, which I agree with you is absolutely righteous in its pursuit. However, the problem is if it is not then taken up, it will go the way of the missed opportunity of Tomlinson, the bonfire of the quangos and the equivalencies of the Wolf review or the diploma. There are successive Governments jumping about there. That is the concern. I worry your permanent secretary saw that and advised against it, but you have overruled it. There is a sense that willing it to happen will make it so, and I do not think that is the case.

Damian Hinds: No, it is not just a case of willing it to happen. You mentioned Tomlinson, diplomas and so on. We have learned from the past. When I took this job, one of the first questions I asked was why we should believe this is different, and I think that this is a very legitimate—

Q1179 **James Frith:** What are you doing differently?

Damian Hinds: Hang on, I have an answer that I am going to talk you through. It is a very legitimate public interest question to ask. One of the key differences is that we are implementing the Sainsbury report in full rather than picking out bits of it, which has happened in the past to suit the will, if you like, or political priorities of the day. Another thing is that we are not trying to make the T level be everything. It is not supposed to cover academic routes as well as technical vocation. It has a specific, albeit broad, job.

A third thing is that, in the past, quite often when you reformed qualifications and courses of study and brought in new ones you did not get rid of any of the old ones. That is how we have ended up with this massive number of different courses and different qualifications that can be difficult for employers to pick their way through, and even harder for kids and their parents. We are doing things differently.

We are also doing things at a good pace, with first teaching of the first three subjects in 54 colleges. This is relatively small-scale beginnings and is just over two years away. We will have a gradual programme then of bringing in this entire reform.

Q1180 **James Frith:** You talked earlier, very eloquently, about the moment when a 14-year-old is at an options evening. You are in front of that same student. What do you hope is said to them about pursuing a T level as the first tranche of students who will be sitting it within a few years?



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Chair: A precise answer if possible. Imagine it is just a minute.

Damian Hinds: It is the whole options evening.

James Frith: In a tweet, Secretary of State.

Chair: Imagine it is more “Just a Minute” than the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

Damian Hinds: The first thing, James, is I would want to say to him, “You have choices. You should not just be sold on a particular approach. You might think about an apprenticeship. You might think about doing A levels, but T levels are a really attractive alternative with quite a lot of study—from 600 going up to 900 hours of study—with a real industrial placement, where you will be interacting with work colleagues and learning about how things work at work. You will be able to carry on doing your English and maths if you need to and improving your digital skills. This will be a qualification that is straightforward and recognised by employers, which will have great value in the workplace and, indeed, in further education that you might want to do”.

Q1181 **Chair:** To put it on the record, my personal view is I strongly welcome any action you take to make sure the T levels are delivered as a schedule, which you wanted to do.

I want to briefly ask you about the consultation paper “Schools that work for everyone” and to turn to grammar schools. If you put the expansion part aside for one minute, separately to that you say in order to support the delivery of more children with disadvantaged backgrounds going to grammar schools you have a memorandum of understanding and other measures, which I do not need to go through as you know the document well. What are the teeth? What happens if nothing happens, given the very low number of free school meal pupils there are in grammar schools at the moment?

Damian Hinds: It is not separate from the expansion question. First of all, the up to £50 million of expansion for selective and partially selective schools needs to be seen in the context of £1 billion for overall expansion of schools. That, in turn, needs to be seen in the context of £23 billion for total school buildings money over a four to five-year period. Bear in mind that we do need more school places and we have already created 825,000 new school places.

Q1182 **Chair:** Sorry, I have to interrupt. I am not talking about the expansion fund. I am talking about the general outreach you talk about in the memorandum of understanding, which is about the existing grammar schools before they have expanded. You have said there should be a memorandum about how they get more disadvantaged pupils into the schools. By the way, you say the same thing for private schools as well. Putting the expansion stuff to one side, I am asking you what are the teeth? What happens if nothing happens?



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Damian Hinds: With the Grammar School Heads Association, it is a MoU—a memorandum of understanding.

Q1183 **Chair:** Where are the teeth? What happens if nothing happens?

Damian Hinds: That is a memorandum of understanding.

Chair: It is just a piece of paper.

Damian Hinds: The teeth, if you like, are on the expansion front. Given we need new school places in many parts of the country, you could just say, "Any type of school can bid into standard funding for that". Instead of that we said, "If you are a selective or partially selective school you must bid into this particular fund". What that enables us to do is precisely require a plan, with tangible steps, for how they are going to go about widening access in exactly the ways you mention.

Q1184 **Chair:** You accept the memorandum about existing pupils is just a piece of paper?

Damian Hinds: I hope it is more than a piece of paper.

Q1185 **Chair:** There are no sanctions if nothing happens?

Damian Hinds: No, it is a statement of intent.

Q1186 **Chair:** What are the sanctions for grammar schools that get money to expand but fail to deliver on their commitment to have more pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds?

Damian Hinds: Generally speaking, I take head teachers, school governors and so on at their word and regard them as honest people who, when they say they will do something, plan to do it. Ultimately, with all of these things, what happens in the future in terms of capital allocations will tend to take into account what has happened in the past.

Q1187 **Chair:** There are no sanctions. If you give them the money and they expand—it is not just £50 million, but is £240 million over five years—and there are not significantly more pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds there are no substantive sanctions you propose, apart from their good word?

Damian Hinds: As I say, I expect people in life in general to be true to their word; particularly with school heads and boards of governors and so on, I do expect that. The second point I made was that future asks for capital will obviously take into account whether people did what they said they would do in previous rounds of asking for capital.

Q1188 **Ian Mearns:** Are you saying we do it after the horse has bolted? Those schools will have already expanded and had that capital input. There has to be some sort of recourse if they do not expand their number of youngsters on free school meals to beyond 3%. There has to be some sort of bite back on that. I think all head teachers start out with good intentions. However, good head teachers in academies, free schools and



HOUSE OF COMMONS

maintained schools are excluding pupils more than they want and off-rolling pupils more than they want. They all started out with good intentions.

Damian Hinds: Yes, and we work with them and try to put the case to them and put them in touch with other people they can learn from and so on. To bid into this fund you will be needing to come forward with tangible plans and specifics on what you are going to do. We will be able to evaluate them against that.

Q1189 **Ian Mearns:** Could you ask Ofsted to have a portion of its inspection of schools that have expanded in that way specifically on that?

Damian Hinds: You can ask Ofsted to do many things. If Amanda Spielman was here she would probably say that often the solution to things people come up with is to get Ofsted to do more inspecting. It does look at how pupil premium money is spent, for example, and these things are related.

Q1190 **Chair:** Even if it works, it is, at the most, likely to benefit roughly 3,000 to 4,000 pupils for £200 million. Figures were done by the Education Endowment Foundation on the impact of personal mentoring and tuition for disadvantaged pupils. You could spend £200 million on effective tuition for around 285,000 pupils for the same money you are giving to grammar schools to expand without any clear sanction if they do not have more disadvantaged pupils. Is that a good use of funds?

Damian Hinds: Chairman, we have spent a great deal more than £50 million on creating new school places—a great deal more—and 825,000 new school places have been created, as against a loss of school places in the period 2004 to 2010. It is necessary to spend money to create school places when demographics dictate you need more places for children to be able to learn.

On the question of other things you can do to help narrow disadvantage, I welcome the EEF's work. Of course, it was itself an important reform to bring in the EEF with its endowment to be able to give this independent appraisal of how these monies can be used. As I was just saying to Ian's question, Ofsted looks at how pupil premium money is spent. I encourage everybody to look at the EEF's work on that.

Q1191 **Lucy Powell:** Just on the grammar schools point, do you personally believe in it? Obviously, there is quite a lot of politics here. This was a sop that the Prime Minister needed to make because she could not fulfil—

Damian Hinds: What do you mean by "believe in it"?

Lucy Powell: Did you really want one of your first major announcements as Education Secretary to be about expanding grammar schools? Did you want that to be the signal you were sending?

Damian Hinds: I wanted part of what I did as Education Secretary to be to make sure there are enough school places for children and for them to



HOUSE OF COMMONS

be high-quality school places, and for there to be opportunities for children from less affluent homes to be able to access the range of education that other children can.

Q1192 Lucy Powell: All those people out there—all those teachers, all those stakeholders and all those parents—were hoping for a change in direction. You have good values and are committed to education. Then, in your first four months, your main announcement is the expansion of grammars. Were you not just a bit annoyed that Downing Street made you do that?

Damian Hinds: No, we are expanding lots of schools and schools are being built. This decade will see the biggest expansion in school places for at least two generations. Lucy, as you know, the overwhelming majority of the secondary school places will be in comprehensive intake schools.

Q1193 Lucy Powell: Exactly. The optics were rubbish, weren't they?

Damian Hinds: There are a relatively small number of areas that have grammar schools as well as secondary modern schools and high schools. In those areas, there is also often demographic need for more school places. Up until recently, it was not possible for those schools to expand in the same way as in other areas. It is right that when you have good or quality education, which parents want and benefits children, they should be able to expand as well.

Q1194 Lucy Powell: Like local authority schools that are good?

Damian Hinds: Introducing the fund we are talking about enabled us to put in place extra leverage to say, "If you are going to expand here we are going to make sure this is to the particular benefit of less affluent children".

Q1195 Michelle Donelan: I want to move the subject on and ask you about adverse childhood experiences. Public Health England has said adults who experience four or more of these things—sexual abuse, domestic violence, parental separation, living with an alcoholic or substance abuser—when you are growing up means you are four times more likely, when older, to suffer from physical ill health, to commit suicide, to have poor mental health, incarceration, to have violent tendencies and so on. However, there is no additional support for schools to be able to deal with these adverse childhood experiences. I know we have the pupil premium but that is very separate because it is focused purely on finances of the parent.

Do you not think this is an area where we really could be doing something? Schools are supposed to provide the society of tomorrow as well, aren't they? These children deserve the opportunities in life that we can give them.

Damian Hinds: Yes. Schools have a very important role to play in, as you say, shaping the "society of tomorrow", alongside parents and others



HOUSE OF COMMONS

in society. I entirely, of course, acknowledge the terrible consequences of childhood traumatic experiences such as you identify. That clearly has an impact on the mental health of many of those young people as they are in school. Many schools these days have counselling available to children. Of course, all of us are much more conscious of the requirements around mental health support these days. We have the children and young people's mental health Green Paper backed by £300 million of funding. I am not saying this deals with all these issues but it is—

Q1196 Michelle Donelan: Sorry, I am conscious of the time. It is not just mental health. It is going to affect their academic attainment and their ability to concentrate, which can be separate to mental health. Do you not think there is the argument that—

Damian Hinds: Counselling, I think, can help.

Q1197 Michelle Donelan: Yes. However, there also needs to be more support in terms of teaching and what the school can give them—that, at the end of the day, costs money and resource—like we do with the pupil premium for children from deprived backgrounds. It is a very valid fund but there is a lot of scope for expanding or reviewing it. I know I say this to you every time you come here but it is such an important area. When we, and Public Health England, have identified these children as severely in need, do you not think we should be looking at the pupil premium again and seeing how we can use that to help these children as well?

Damian Hinds: You are right, we have the pupil premium that is income-based. There is also the pupil premium plus, which is about children in care and care leavers—those who have been in care. There is also a wider group known as children in need. I think it is right we continue to look at all these different groups and how they can best be supported in the school system and I will continue to do that.

Q1198 Mr William Wragg: Very quickly, Chair, and developing that theme in terms of PSHE, rumour has it—rumours are often wrong, I admit—the draft guidelines are delayed for making PSHE compulsory. Is there a delay and will it be ready for the planned implementation in September 2019?

Damian Hinds: The legislation says it will be mandatory to provide relationships education in primary school, relationships and sex education in secondary school, and it gives a power to the Secretary of State to make PSHE, or elements thereof, mandatory. We are working on the guidelines and the regulations around RSE and relationships education. I would anticipate consulting on those shortly.

On your question on September 2019, the plan is for it to be available from September 2019 to teach and mandatory probably from September 2020. That is part of my commitment to the profession to give time for things to become mandatory.

Q1199 James Frith: On that point, one further question: does the RSE have



HOUSE OF COMMONS

your commitment to be LGBT inclusive and will you consider that when judging it ahead of going forward?

Damian Hinds: Yes. I think relationships and sex education in secondary school can play a very important part in helping support children as they are coming to terms with puberty, their sexuality and sexual orientation. That is an important part.

Q1200 **Lucy Powell:** A final question, sorry. Over the last few years, it is fair to say that HE has been protected from austerity; in fact, it has seen over a 25% increase in its expenditure potential. Meanwhile FE has seen big cuts over that time, such that we now have the HE sector receiving £8 billion more in public funds than FE. Will your post-18 review address this imbalance?

Damian Hinds: First, let me say we talked earlier about T levels, which is a big opportunity for the college sector. Apprenticeships are as well. By the end of this decade the total spend on apprenticeships, because of the levy, will be double what it was at the start of the decade. Colleges are not the only ones that can, but they can of course benefit from that spend.

As for the 18-plus review, we will have to see what the independent panel comes forward with and then the Government will respond, which will be in the New Year.

Chair: That is a marvellous Sir Humphrey answer.

Damian Hinds: It had the benefit of veracity.

Q1201 **Chair:** Where are you on maths and English GCSE resits in FE colleges? Are you looking at that?

Damian Hinds: I do not have a new announcement to make on policy in that area right now.

Q1202 **Chair:** Have there been any developments in terms of the manifesto commitment to give transport costs for apprenticeships?

Damian Hinds: This is something the Department for Transport is looking at. I do not have any new news to bring you today but I do recognise that issue, of course.

Q1203 **Chair:** We have raised it with your predecessor.

Damian Hinds: I know, and with me.

Chair: Every time we get stonewalled about it. It was a manifesto commitment. Either it is going to happen or it has changed because we do not have the resources, but I think the public has a right to know what the policy is going to be.

Michelle Donelan: At least what the timeframe is.

Chair: Or the timeframe, yes.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Michelle Donelan: How long they are going to look at it for.

Damian Hinds: I take your point. As I say, it is something the Department for Transport is looking at.

Q1204 **Chair:** I have a final light-hearted question, if I may. On the front page of *The Sun* today there was an article by Nick Boles, the former Skills Minister, who suggests that as long as England remains in the World Cup all Whitehall buildings should fly the flag of St George. Is the Department for Education flying the flag of St George and, if not, will you do it?

Damian Hinds: That is very good. I do not have my copy of *The Sun* yet. We fly the Union flag.

Chair: Will you fly the flag of St George while England is in the World Cup as suggested by the former Skills Minister?

Damian Hinds: I will look into it. I will personally wear my Three Lions badge anyway.

Q1205 **Chair:** Thank you, Secretary of State. Thank you also for very comprehensive answers. You have been here a long time and we have covered an enormous number of topics.

Damian Hinds: Thank you. I am very grateful to the Committee. As I say, I take very seriously your deliberations and your input, so thank you very much for what you do.