

## **Coalition Changes – Update March to May 2012**

### **New Early Years Framework**

1. A slimmed down and more focused [Early Years Foundation Stage](#) (EYFS) for children aged 0-5-year-olds has been published. The new EYFS, which will take effect from 1 September 2012, focuses on getting children ready for education and increasing the attainment of all children, particularly those from deprived backgrounds.
2. The revised curriculum reduces the number of early learning goals from 69 to 17, gives more focus to the main areas of learning that are most essential for children's healthy development and simplifies assessment at age five. It also provides earlier intervention for children who need extra help with a progress check at age two.

### **Improving attendance at school**

3. Charlie Taylor was commissioned by Education Secretary Michael Gove to look at the issue of school attendance in the wake of the summer riots last year. His [independent review](#) has now been published which calls for:
  - the Government to publish data on attendance in reception along with local and national averages and this is considered when Ofsted inspects;
  - primary schools analyse their data on attendance and quickly pick up on children who are developing a pattern of absence; and
  - primary schools focussing on supporting parents in nursery and reception who are failing to get their children to school.
  - a toughening up of the system by increasing the fines. The Government has accepted this recommendation and from September 2012, headteachers will be able to impose a fine of £60 (a £10 increase) on parents whom they consider are allowing their child to miss too much school without a valid reason. If they fail to pay within 28 days it will double to £120 (a £20 increase), to be paid within 42 days. Charlie Taylor has also recommended that once the fine has doubled, the money should be recovered automatically from child benefit. Parents who do not receive child benefit and fail to pay fines would have the money recovered through county courts.

## **New rules restore headteachers' power to exclude disruptive children**

- Currently when a headteacher excludes a child from school, the school can be forced by an appeals panel to re-admit that child. New rules will put an end to excluded pupils winning the right to come back to school against the headteacher's wishes. Under the new system, headteachers will have the power to exclude a child as long as the decision is legal, reasonable and fair. If the new review panels believe this has not been the case, they will be able to require schools to revisit their decision. They will not be able to force the school to take back the child. These new regulations will apply to maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units and come into force in September.

## **SEN support staff**

- The annual SEN support scholarship programme will provide up to £2,000 each to boost the skills of talented teaching assistants and school staff who work with children with SEND. The scholarship will part-fund (50% of total cost) staff through rigorous, specialist courses and qualifications. Applications will be opened on 30 April and closed on 17 May 2012, with the first scholarships awarded later this year.

## **Academies Update**

			Date opened
	Sponsored academies:		
1	The Wellington Academy	Salisbury	September 2009
2	Sarum Academy	Salisbury	September 2010
	Non-sponsored academies:		
3	Hardenhuish	Chippenham	September 2010
4	Lavington	Lavington	January 2011
5	South Wilts	Salisbury	January 2011
6	Bishop Wordsworth's	Salisbury	March 2011
7	Corsham Primary School	Corsham	April 2011
8	The Corsham School	Corsham	April 2011
9	Sheldon School	Chippenham	April 2011
10	Pewsey Vale	Pewsey	July 2011
11	Wootton Bassett	Wootton Bassett	July 2011

1 2	Kingdown School	Warminster	August 2011
1 3	St Laurence	Bradford on Avon	August 2011
1 4	Malmesbury	Malmesbury	August 2011
1 5	The Holy Trinity School	Great Cheverell	September 2011
1 6	Saint Edmund's Catholic Academy	Calne	September 2011
1 7	St Joseph's Catholic Primary School	Devizes	September 2011
1 8	St Augustine's Catholic School	Trowbridge	September 2011
1 9	Springfields School	Calne	September 2011
2 0	The John Bentley	Calne	November 2011
2 1	St Edmunds CE Girls School	Salisbury	February 2012
2 2	The John of Gaunt School	Trowbridge	April 2012
2 3	The Mead Academy Trust	Trowbridge	May 2012
2 4	Holy Trinity School,	Calne	May 2012
2 5	By Brook Valley Primary		May 2012

### **School Funding Reform**

6. The Department for Education has published its consultation on school funding reform. [School funding reform: Next steps towards a fairer system](#) explains how central government plans to proceed with reform until the end of the current Spending Review period. Key points from the document include: confirmation of working towards introducing a national funding formula in the next Spending Review period; setting the Minimum Funding Guarantee at minus 1.5% for 2013-14 and 2014-15; local funding arrangements will be simplified and Schools Forums' reformed; the Education Funding Agency will play a strong role in ensuring fairness within the new system; a new methodology for funding high need pupils will be introduced, and the funding of early years provision will be simplified and made more transparent.
7. The deadline for responses to the consultation is Monday 21 May 2012. Changes to school budgets will take effect in April 2013. Work is already underway in Wiltshire to address these changes.

## **Children and Families Bill**

8. The [Children and Families Bill](#) is expected to be introduced early in 2013 and carry over into the third session of this Parliament for Royal Assent. The Bill would:
- a. introduce a single, simpler assessment process for children with SEN or disabilities, backed up by new Education, Health and Care Plans
  - b. speed up care proceedings in family courts so children do not face long and unnecessary hold ups in finding permanent and stable homes – with the introduction of a new six-month time limit on cases and other reforms.
  - c. include legislation to stop delays by social workers in matching parents to ethnic minority children.
  - d. strengthen the law so children have a relationship with both parents if families break up – if that is in their best interest. Ministers will consult shortly on the legal options about how this would work.
  - e. strengthen the powers of the Children’s Commissioner – to champion children’s rights and hold government to account for legislation and policy.

## **Government response to SEND Green Paper**

Some detail of the content of the Children and Families Bill has already been outlined by central government through Sarah Teather’s announcement of how health, education and care services will be legally required to work together in a different way. The main elements in the [Support and Aspiration](#) report are:

- Replacing SEN statements and separate learning difficulty assessments (for older children) with a single, simpler birth to 25 years assessment process and education, health and care plan from 2014. Parents with the plans would have the right to a personal budget for their support.
- Providing statutory protections comparable to those currently associated with a statement of SEN to up to 25-years-old in further education – instead of there being a 'cliff edge' when it is cut off at 16, to help young people into employment and independent living.
- LAs and health services will be required to link up services for disabled children and young people – so they are jointly planned and commissioned.

- Requiring LAs to publish a local offer showing the support available to disabled children and young people and those with SEN, and their families.
- Introducing mediation for disputes and trialling giving children the right to appeal if they are unhappy with their support.
- Children would have a new legal right to seek a place at state academies and Free Schools – currently it is limited to maintained mainstream and special schools. LAs would have to name the parent's preferred school so long it was suitable for the child.

### **Adoption scorecards**

9. The Government has introduced [adoption scorecards](#) for all local authority areas based on figures from 2008/9 to 2010/11. The scorecards are a key part of the Government's tougher approach to addressing underperformance in the adoption system – set out in the radical Action Plan for Adoption published in March. A new assessment process will reduce bureaucracy and the delays which put off potential adopters and slow down the finding of homes for children. Timescales will be challenged through the setting of thresholds of the maximum time these processes should take.
10. They show 80 local authority areas have met the interim thresholds (of 21 months from entering care to adoption and matching a child to a family within seven months of a court order being made) but the other 72 did not meet one or both of these key measures. Wiltshire does not meet the interim threshold for entering care to adoption but does meet the other indicator of court order to match.

### **Expert family organisations to deliver parenting classes**

11. The National Childbirth Trust, Save the Children, and the Fatherhood Institute are some of the experienced family organisations who will deliver parenting classes in three areas of the country from this spring. A coalition government trial starting in April will test out how to establish a new market in parenting classes for all parents. Over the next two years an offer of free universal parenting classes, face-to-face and online, will be available to all parents of children aged five years and under, in Middlesbrough, High Peak in Derbyshire, and Camden in London.
12. The classes are designed to strengthen parenting skills, and to encourage parents to feel that it is normal to get help in the first few years of their child's life, just as they do in antenatal classes before their child is born. All mothers and fathers in the trial areas with children five years and under will be entitled to a voucher covering the cost of a programme of parenting classes. Vouchers will be distributed by professionals working in the early

years – for example, from nurseries, children’s centres, midwives and health visitors.

### **Protecting children from commercialisation and sexualisation**

13. The Government has set out [new measures](#) to protect children from the creeping tide of commercialisation and sexualisation in society. The Bailey review found that increasingly we live in a society full of sexualised imagery, where families don’t feel in control and children can’t be children. It said that parents are worried about their children being exposed to inappropriate material and that although families want to take responsibility, all too often they don’t know how. The measures announced include:

- consulting on whether the current age rating system should be extended to cover more music DVDs and Blu-ray discs - to protect children from inappropriate material.
- working with the music industry, online retailers and video services, to have clear warnings on explicit videos where they are shown online.
- working with the BPI (the British record industry’s trade association) and digital services to ensure that wherever possible parents have the option of controls that will hide videos and songs intended for an older audience.
- taking forward the final stage of legislation needed so that the planned new system of age classification and labelling for videogames giving clearer age ratings and advice for parents can start in July.
- asking the Advertising Standards Authority to consider whether more should be done to spell out the commercial intent of ‘advergames’ to young people and their parents.

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Largely taken from the DFE website content 22 March – 16 May 201