

UK EDUCATION POLICY; Foreword from the Secretary of State

Education has the power to change lives. It opens doors to better employment, more active citizenship and well-informed health choices which benefit future generations. At its best, it transforms the prospects of poor and marginalised children and builds more meritocratic societies.

Developing countries have made huge strides in expanding schooling in recent decades, so that most children are now able to access primary education.

The global focus must now be on improving the quality of education to ensure children are learning the basics. Over 90% of primary-age children in low-income countries and 75% of children in lower-middle income countries – around 330 million children – are not expected to read or do basic maths by the end of primary school. These statistics are truly shocking and demand urgent action.

Together national governments and international partners must tackle the learning crisis at its root and ensure that children are getting the best start which they can build on through future education and employment. Business as usual will not achieve the transformative change that is needed. We must join forces to drive a new approach to fundamental education challenges.

As a global leader on education, Britain will throw the full weight of its support behind this effort, bringing our influence, expertise and finance to the table.

Our top priority will be raising the bar on teaching quality. We know that good teaching is vital to children's progress. Yet many teachers lack the knowledge and skills to do their jobs well

Of course, there are many examples of highly skilled, reliable teachers all over the world. But we need this to be the norm everywhere.

In all our efforts, we must ensure that poor and marginalised children are not left behind. The UK will show new leadership on education for children with disabilities and maintain the pressure to deliver for children affected by crises. We will continue to champion hard-to-reach girls, promoting 12 years of quality education and learning and improving the prospects of the large numbers who do not go on to secondary school.

I know that many of the challenges which hold back progress on learning are highly entrenched in education systems and that achieving change will be difficult. But there is no alternative if we are to bring an end to the learning crisis – so we are up for the challenge.