



Education Committee

House of Commons London SW1A 0AA

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Website www.parliament.uk/education-committee

Rt Hon Damian Hinds MP
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3BT

4 May 2018

Dear Secretary of State,

On Wednesday morning the Committee held a public evidence session with representatives of the Northern Powerhouse Partnership. We decided to hold the session as it seemed to us that many of the issues raised in the NPP's report on *Educating the North* spoke clearly to our twin themes of social justice and productivity.

We were struck by the stark educational attainment gap between the North and other parts of England, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. At the end of Key Stage 4, attainment 8 scores of northern pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds were 13 points behind those of their fellow pupils. Northern pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds achieve lower attainment levels than disadvantaged pupils elsewhere in the country (1.3 points below the national average and 6.5 points below their peers in London).

We believe that the report provides a clear analysis of the challenges facing education in the North and sets a course for its improvement. It was clear from our meeting that Government alone cannot provide the solutions. However, there is an important role for the Department for Education to play, as well as action required across Government more generally.

To that end, we would like to know what action the Department is taking on the following points:

1. The NPP's recommendations to reform Pupil Premium to better target funding for disadvantage and to provide bespoke careers guidance and workplace-based learning for those receiving Pupil Premium funding.
2. The Northern Powerhouse Education Fund and how much of the funding has been spent.
3. Teacher recruitment and retention in the North.
4. How the Government's careers strategy will benefit the North, and the NPP's recommendation to measure schools on the employability and success of their pupils at age 25.



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5. The contrast between the success of some MATs in London and the recent high-profile failures of some MATs in the North.
6. Maximising the opportunity to the North of England presented by degree apprenticeships and increasing the level of qualifications/skills at level four and above to at least the national average (the Northern Powerhouse has a lower proportion of workforce at level four and above in the advanced manufacturing, health innovation, energy and digital sectors).
7. The lack of a coordinated Government strategy for the North and the gap between attainment in the North and London since the London Challenge.

We look forward to discussing some of these issues with you at your next appearance before the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Robert Halfon".

Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP
Chair of the Education Committee