

7 April 2016

Mr Neil Carmichael MP
Chairman, Education Select Committee
House of Commons
Westminster
SW1A 0AA

Dear Neil

Education Select Committee 2 March 2016: The quality and purpose of education in England

Once again please accept my thanks for the opportunity to appear before your committee last month. As promised during my evidence session, please find enclosed a copy of the letter I recently sent to the Secretary of State outlining my personal view of how the government might wish to address issues relating to the quality of school leadership in England.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Gill

Dear Nicky

A leadership college at the University of Buckingham

Leadership is critical to the future success of our education system.

The country needs to ensure that we have enough good leaders of our schools and colleges, particularly in those areas that need them most.

The National College has failed to deliver on the high hopes that politicians had for it when it was set up a dozen or so years ago. It has failed to provide our education system with enough good leaders. Indeed, the National Governors Association reported this year that a third of governors have had to re-advertise Headteacher posts because of a serious shortage of high-calibre applicants to both primary and secondary vacancies.

The closure of the College's headquarters in Nottingham reflects the loss of confidence in an institution which should be at the heart of educational reform.

What went wrong?

- The College started badly and has never really recovered. The programmes it offered lacked credibility, particularly the NPQH, which was often seen as too theoretical and focussed on process (budget planning, timetabling etc) rather than the personal and professional qualities required for strong leadership.
- The College has not been sufficiently strategic. For example, Teaching Schools and National Leaders of Education are disproportionately concentrated in those areas with already high numbers of good schools, in mostly urban areas.
- Isolated, rural and coastal communities as well as satellite towns around the big cities are badly served by the National College. It is little surprise, therefore, that the lowest performing schools, particularly secondaries, are in these areas.
- There is no evidence that those with leadership potential in Teaching Schools are encouraged or directed into leadership positions in these areas.
- Those with leadership ambitions in the system are already 'snaffled up' by programmes such as future leaders but the scale is too small.
- Much more needs to be done for the much greater number of people who have leadership potential but are too reticent or lacking in confidence to apply for such programmes. The College has never worked with headteachers to identify and encourage these people into leadership programmes.

- Relying on a laissez-faire market-approach to deliver good leaders will not suffice. A mediocre academy chain will not have enough good and outstanding leaders from which others can learn.

My proposals are, therefore, as follows:

- 1.** A College of Leadership at the University of Buckingham which is supported financially by government.
- 2.** This College will focus on the qualities required for headship in both the state and independent sectors and not on middle leadership and other leadership programmes.
- 3.** The focus of the College will be to deliver good leaders to schools and colleges across the country, particularly those which have problems with recruitment.
- 4.** The College will appoint Regional Directors to work with headteachers, executive heads, regional commissioners and local authorities to identify potential leaders.
- 5.** Once identified, these potential leaders will be seen as 'apprentice' headteachers contracted by government to work with outstanding headteachers leading schools in different situations – urban, rural, coastal etc.
- 6.** These 'apprentice' heads will have a contract for approximately 3-5 years to allow them to work in different types of schools under the aegis of National Leaders of Education (NLE).
- 7.** Both NLE and teaching schools will have to sign up to this programme and agree to train and assess candidates. Indeed, this should be a pre-condition of NLE and Teaching School status.
- 8.** These outstanding headteachers (NLEs) would also have to agree to partnership arrangements with the feeder schools to ensure that vacancies in the feeder schools are covered through secondments from the host school.
- 9.** Assuming that the host teaching school would have a significant number of outstanding leaders this, in itself, would help to raise standards across the country.
- 10.** Part of the apprenticeship programme would be a one day/evening attendance at the University of Buckingham for training and professional development.
- 11.** CPD programmes would be delivered by outstanding headteachers from across the country.

12. Once properly assessed and accredited these 'apprentice' headteachers will move into headteacher positions as directed by their contract with government. This will inevitably limit the freedom of trustees to appoint who they want but the assumption is that the DfE would produce a list of preferred candidates from the 'apprentice' pool for their selection.

These proposals will only work if there is a firm government commitment to them.

These 'apprentice' headteachers must be seen as pioneers of system improvement. Their contract with government would continue into headship so that they can be directed into the most challenging areas. Their salaries and relocation costs would obviously have to reflect the government's determination to make this work. We might have to calibrate this proposal to focus on leadership in the most challenging areas. In other words, the contract with government would only be for those who are willing to be directed into headship positions in these areas.

Yours sincerely,

Michael