

# The reality behind the rhetoric

How the coalition government's programme will affect schools

**Education**

**Free schools**

**Curriculum**

**Assessment**

**Teachers**

**Academies**

**Special needs**

The new coalition government has wasted no time in implementing a raft of policy changes. This supplement looks at what this means for teachers, schools and students. We begin with an overview of what has happened in the first few months

**I**t is often said that the hallmark of a government is how it handles its first weeks in power. Does it consult and listen and take time to explain the bigger picture it has planned for the nation, or does it hurry through a raft of measures and policies?

In the case of the coalition government, the first 100 days were a complete rush of activity, with education bearing the brunt of reforms.

The new, far-reaching Academies Act was pushed through in late July using



Parliamentary processes previously reserved for emergency legislation, such as anti-terrorism and dealing with dangerous dogs. The Act seeks to allow the first academies to open this term, and the first “free” schools to come to life in a year’s time (see pages 4 to 7).

The Department for Children, Schools and Families has been rebranded as the Department for Education and Michael Gove appointed by the prime minister as secretary of state for education.

Within days of coming to office, Mr Gove

## Coalition government: Three months of cuts

**May 11:** David Cameron becomes prime minister after agreeing terms for a coalition government with the Liberal Democrats.

**May 12:** Department for Education (DfE) replaces Department for Children, Schools and Families. Michael Gove appointed secretary of state for education.

**May 13:** Funding frozen for Building Schools for the Future (BSF) and Primary Capital programmes.

**May 24:** Abolition of Becta announced; cuts to Home Access initiative and Harnessing Technology grants.

**May 25:** Two Education Bills announced in the Queen’s Speech, with the Academies Bill imminent and another Education Bill to follow in the autumn.

**May 26:** Mr Gove invites headteachers to seek academy status in a letter. Outstanding schools told they will be fast-tracked.

**May 28:** Announcement of the planned abolition of the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency.

**June 2:** Plans to scrap the General Teaching Council for England announced.

**June 7:** Prime minister announces cuts to funding for one-to-one tuition in maths and English, as well as for gifted and talented schemes, and Every Child a Reader and

Writer. It is confirmed that the academic Diplomas will not be developed, while the new primary curriculum is abolished alongside the new PSHE, citizenship and religious education curricula.

**June 9:** Universal free school meals scheme scrapped.

**June 15:** Independent Safeguarding Authority Vetting and Barring Scheme is halted.

**June 18:** Independent schools and other interested parties invited to set up free schools.

**June 23:** Teachers’ pay award to be honoured until 2011, DfE confirms.

**June 30:** Dissolution of the school workforce Social Partnership; £40 million cuts to budget of Training and Development Agency for Schools affecting programmes for workforce development and training of support staff.

**July 5:** Cuts to BSF announced amid uproar from schools and local authorities as Mr Gove publishes the first of several inaccurate lists of schools affected.

**July 19:** Consultation announced on changes to the School Teachers’ Pay and Conditions Document 2010. Mr Gove states he may impose a cap on headteachers’ pay, overriding the School Teachers’ Review Body.

**July 26:** DfE announces consultation on changes to school funding and the introduction

of a pupil premium. Planning applications process to be simplified to facilitate the set-up of free schools.

**July 26:** Academies Act 2010 is passed in Parliament after the usual Parliamentary process for passing legislation is bypassed.

**July 26:** Ministers lay regulations scrapping the requirement on schools to record incidents of use of force, potentially leaving staff open to future false allegations. Regulations laid during the summer holiday remove the requirement on academies and other schools to work together in behaviour partnerships.

**July 29:** Mr Gove under attack for misleading the public after it is revealed that just 153 schools have applied to become academies.

**July 30:** Academies policy in disarray after Ravenscroft School in Barnet has its application to become an academy turned down, despite being “outstanding”.

**August 4:** DfE orders a review of the role and office of children’s commissioner.

**August 5:** Officials at Sandwell and Nottingham City councils threaten legal action against the government over the BSF cuts.

**August 11:** Grants to 132 local authorities for children’s play areas frozen by the DfE.

**August 13:** U-turn on coalition plans to cap headteachers’ pay.

announced millions of pounds worth of cuts, scrapping a number of educational programmes, including ICT grants for schools, school rebuilding projects, and abolishing a number of national education bodies (see pages 8 and 9).

In fact, Mr Gove wasted no time in stamping his authority on his new domain. As had been indicated by the Conservatives prior to the General Election, a number of education quangos were immediately abolished or put on notice.

Within a year, Becta, the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency and the General Teaching Council for England will cease to exist. Becta is probably the organisation whose demise is most lamented by schools, who have come to rely on its expertise in ensuring classrooms are equipped for 21st century teaching.

At the time of going to press, it was not yet clear how or if the work of these organisations was going to continue and to where the statutory functions for which they have previously been responsible might be transferred.

Controversially, the £55 billion Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme was also scrapped. A number of school rebuilding projects were given the go ahead, but more than 700 schools were informed that plans for their rebuilding and refurbishment were being shelved.

The BSF episode has proved to be one of the most damaging for the coalition government so far and caused fury and dismay in local authorities and schools.

In his rush to halt the programme, Mr Gove published several error-strewn lists of affected schools and was forced to apologise to Parliament for his handling of the announcement, although he maintained that the programme was unwieldy and wasteful.

A review will now follow on how money on capital spending will be allocated and the schools missing out can but hope their plans will be realised at a later date.

Meanwhile, the Rose Review of the primary curriculum was also thrown out (see page 10), while the future of the Diploma remains uncertain after funding was withdrawn for any further development of the qualification (see page 13).

Mr Gove has insisted any cuts to education would not affect frontline services. But barely two months into the new administration, the effect of the programme of cuts has been felt keenly by schools and teachers.

The BSF announcement sparked the first major demonstration against the coalition government's education policies, led by the NASUWT.

Hundreds of teachers, pupils and parents marched on Parliament on July 19 in protest at the cuts and the speed with which ministers are accused of "dismantling the state education system".

Chris Keates, the NASUWT's general secretary, said the first weeks of the coalition administration had smacked of "arrogance and recklessness" which was bound to lead to mistakes and errors of judgement.

She said: "Decisions which affect the life chances of thousands of children and young

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people should be made on the basis of wide consultation, careful consideration of the facts, and proper Parliamentary scrutiny.

"Yet here we have a government which has axed, with breathtaking speed and no consultation, hundreds of school building projects. With the same indecent haste the government has forced an Academies Bill through Parliament which will set up a system of private schools funded by the taxpayer.

"The money being saved from axing school building and IT projects is now being used to bankroll academies and free schools.

"Every day a decision is announced which will have profoundly adverse consequences for schools, for jobs and for children and young people.

"This is no way to run an education service and its no way to run the country."

As part of this publication, we asked education minister Michael Gove to answer six key questions from the NASUWT. He declined. We summarise the questions here

### Academies

Your ambition is to see the majority of schools taken out of local authority control and turned into independent academies. How would you justify a policy which could lead to increased costs of provision across the school system at a time of recession and which could lead to inequality of provision and profiteering by academy proprietors/sponsors?

### Free schools

At a time of cuts and savings across government, how can you justify the free schools policy and how would you respond to the charge that these schools are socially divisive?

### Pay and conditions

If schools are given the freedom to pay what they like, how will you ensure teachers do not find themselves less well off and how will you ensure that senior leaders do not award themselves exuberant pay packages, as has been reported in some academies?

### Technical academies/Diplomas

For too long, this country has had a divide between the academic and the vocational, with the latter often seen as a second class education. Is there a danger of your policies



entrenching the divide between academic and vocational qualifications?

### Transport/one-to-one tuition cuts

How will schools and local authorities, especially those in rural areas, cope with

the massive extra costs of transport if large numbers of schools opt out of local authority control?

### Key stage 2 tests

Are SATs here to stay and why?

## The coalition's dramatic speeding up of the academies programme has infuriated education unions, who are angry at the lack of consultation and what they call privatisation by stealth

The concept of academies is taking on a whole new meaning. While the previous government set up the flagship schools to raise standards in challenging areas, the coalition's proposals are based on an entirely different premise.

The Department for Education's definition of the new schools is that they will be "publicly funded independent schools". The intention is to give academies – which for the first time will include primary schools and special schools – greater freedoms and allow them

The new academies bear no resemblance to the programme introduced by the last government. The coalition government's version is all about dismantling state education. It is about opening up state schools to a free market

to operate free from local authority control. Heads and governing bodies will be able to set the pay and working conditions for staff, teach what and how they want, and change the length of school days and term times.

The Academies Bill was rushed through Parliament in July, using processes usually reserved for more urgent legislation. Critics have said the government's haste suggested how flimsy it knew the policy to be.

The government compressed the Parliamentary process by taking out the committee stage of the Bill in the House of Commons – an unusual step usually reserved for anti-terror legislation and constitutional matters.

It means the Bill did not receive the detailed scrutiny and debate to which legislation of this nature would normally be subjected to before being passed.

Michael Gove, the education secretary, wants all schools eventually to become academies. Any school deemed by Ofsted to be "outstanding" can automatically become an academy; other schools will have to apply and may need to prepare a business plan which will be considered by the Department for Education for approval.

Mr Gove said the proposed changes would bring about a "process of educational transformation, which will ensure that instead of this country declining relative to other nations, we once again become a world leader in education".

However, the academies programme has attracted sharp criticism and opposition from many quarters.

Chris Keates, the NASUWT's general secretary, said: "The new academies bear no resemblance to the programme introduced by the last government.

"The coalition government's version is all about dismantling state education. It is about opening up state schools to a free market, and the only similarity between this and the previous programme is the name. In every other respect it is completely different. It is an extremely worrying development."

The speed at which the Academies Act was forced through Parliament attracted criticism even from within the coalition's own ranks – both from Conservatives and Liberal Democrats. However, Mr Gove maintains that the commitment was a clear manifesto pledge.

The implications of schools leaving the control of local authorities are many and varied. Crucially, the move opens the door to

a free market in education and commercial activity in schools.

What were previously public assets could be handed over to private companies, operating independently as businesses with charitable status.

The spirit of collaboration that was the hallmark of the state education system in recent years is at risk of largely disappearing as schools leave the control of local authorities, though there is an implicit expectation that academies will continue to work with less successful schools.

It is not clear, for example, how such a move will affect consortia delivering 14 to 19 Diplomas – though these qualifications also face an uncertain future (see page 13).

It is expected that many schools will be tempted by financial incentives but may find they have to bear extra costs which they had not expected as a result of opting to go it alone.

Currently, many services provided by local authorities are more affordable through economies of scale – however, schools that become academies might find they have to pay at commercial rates in order to obtain similar services.

Changing schools: Mossbourne Community Academy in London was one of the first such schools created under the Labour government. The coalition now wants every school to become an academy



Schools have been promised £25,000 each to help them make the transition to academy status. In reality, however, this sum is unlikely to meet in full the costs of academy conversion.

Crucially, the move to academy status may affect the day-to-day working lives of teachers.

The pay and conditions of teachers who are already working in schools converting to academies are protected under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (known as TUPE).

However, new staff would likely be employed on different pay and conditions because academies are not bound by the existing national frameworks which entitle teachers and headteachers to guaranteed PPA (planning, preparation and assessment) time, rarely cover, dedicated headship time, and leadership and management time, nor would these schools be bound by any agreements negotiated with local authorities.

Furthermore, academies will not be affected by any revisions to the national School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document. Instead, academy schools will be able to draft their own terms and conditions



# An academic debate?

for new staff, and existing staff who agree to a change of contract.

The changes could also mean Saturday working and longer school days, and an increase in the number of days worked over a school year.

It is known from the first 200 academies established before the General Election that teachers' pay was varied and working hours were extended. In some schools, maternity entitlements were also cut.

Schools that convert to academy status would also need to be able to meet the cost of building repairs and maintenance regardless of what happens in the future. This could mean hefty bills for some schools, running to hundreds of thousands of pounds.

Ms Keates said: "When we asked how an academy school would meet the cost of major repair work, we have been told that they would have to seek a commercial loan from a bank. But how would a school even begin to pay that sort of money back?"

The government is keen to ensure that conversion to academy status can be completed by schools quickly and is fast-tracking existing "outstanding" schools through the process of academy conversion.

However, in reality few schools were expected to have converted to academy status for the start of the academic year, particularly given that the process of completing conversion would have to have happened during the summer break.

Ms Keates said: "Few parents and teachers know anything about this process or the progress that their school has made in seeking to become an academy in September. As the new term begins, it is important to seek confirmation from the governing body about whether the school is considering conversion to academy status. It is extremely worrying that people are being sucked

Letting a diverse collection of schools go their separate ways is a recipe for chaos

into the idea that these academies are state schools. They are not. These are independent schools being funded by the taxpayer."

Dave Prentis, general secretary of Unison, added: "The speed at which the new government rushed out its Academies Bill is worrying. The governors, teachers and school staff Mr Gove says he wants to empower are being completely ignored. So are parents, and local communities, who deserve a place in this debate over the future of their schools."

Meanwhile, Professor Alan Smithers, director of the Centre for Education and Employment Research at the University of Buckingham, said schools performed better when "governments get off their backs".

However, while stating that greater autonomy along the lines proposed for the academies could "contribute to general improvement", he added that this can only happen within "a sound framework".

He said: "Letting a diverse collection of schools go their separate ways is a recipe for chaos. There has to be a structure which brings everything together. At the last count, there were 20,300 state-funded schools in England, and it is hard to see how they could all be overseen from Westminster."

Free schools look set to form one of the most fundamental changes ever implemented in our education system and it is a scheme that has sparked fierce criticism

**G**overnment plans to bring in free schools represent a key part of the strategy to reform public services and devolve power and control of state-funded services to the public and to professionals. Ministers say that they want to “break the state’s monopoly in education” by allowing parents, teachers and other interested parties to open schools in response to local demand.

There are very strong similarities between free schools and academies – both are intended to operate independently from state control while also continuing to receive public funding.

The free schools idea is based on experience in Sweden and the United States with the establishment of their so-called charter schools.

Some schools may be opened from scratch, but others are expected to include independent schools converting to become state-funded free schools. Planning regulations governing where a school may be set up are also set to change, making it easier for free schools to be housed anywhere there is space – including disused shops, factories or office blocks.

The government’s claim is that it is the quality of teaching that is important to children’s learning and progression and not the quality of the building in which learning takes place.

The Harnessing Technology Grant, designed to provide financial support to enable all schools to access broadband technology, has been abolished and the money diverted to help support the roll out of the free schools policy.

Groups wishing to open a free school are required to submit a proposal to the secretary of state outlining their reasons for doing so, the aims and objectives of the proposed school, the proposed curriculum, where the school will be located, and providing evidence of demand for places.

Free schools are going to be an engine for private companies to move into the education business



A free for all?

The government does not intend to limit free schools being opened in areas where there are already surplus school places, potentially derailing any attempt by a local authority to rationalise school places in an area to take account of changing demographic patterns.

Ministers want the first free schools to open in September 2011. Blazing a trail for the government, and with this target date in mind, is the journalist and author Toby Young, who is leading a campaign to set up the West London Free School. It has the backing of 400 parents and its objective is to create a school with “high standards of behaviour and a commitment to academic excellence but which is open to all, regardless of ability”.

The group wants to set up a “comprehensive grammar” school. Mr Young has said: “It’s not only meant to be for the children of pushy parents like us, but for kids who don’t have pushy parents but would benefit from a pushy school.”

He put his plans to Ealing Council before

Christmas last year and found a potential site – an unused school. However, those plans are believed to have failed and the group is looking again for new premises.

“We intend to enter into a partnership with an established education provider who will operate the school on a day-to-day basis,” Mr Young said.

“I don’t know how to run a school. There are a few teachers in our group, but all of us have day jobs. It makes more sense to involve professional well established groups.

“We won’t be a hostage to them. We will sub-contract them to operate the school, but if they do not do a good job we will review it.”

The New Schools Network (NSN), which has been brought in by ministers to support the establishment of free schools, says that its mission is to “improve the quality of education – particularly for the most deprived – by increasing the number of independent, innovative schools within the state sector”.

NSN director Rachel Wolf is a former education advisor to the Conservative Party, whose appointment sparked accusations of



cronymism. She said: “Most parents want to be involved in the group that is setting up but do not want to run the school.

“A lot of what we do is put them in touch with education providers who could talk to them, building a relationship. It’s never about parents running schools but about them deciding what kind of school they want to send their children to.”

The NSN says it has received more than 450 expressions of interest from groups wanting to set up free schools. Data from the Department for Education published during the summer, however, suggests that the level of firm interest is a 10th of that number.

However, Ms Wolf believes the concept of free schools appeals to parents who cannot afford to move into the right catchment areas or to pay for school fees.

Free schools, like academies, could be a potential minefield in terms of the employment of staff and for the future of industrial relations in schools. The current national framework for pay and conditions for teachers will not apply in free schools.

Instead, the proprietors of these schools will have the power to set the contracts they believe that staff are worth.

Dr Patrick Roach, deputy general secretary of the NASUWT, said: “It’s entirely possible that many of these schools, which might be set up under licence for very short periods of time, may not want the hassle or responsibility of employing staff directly. We are really very concerned that these free schools will mean a casualised workforce in schools, with teachers and support staff deployed on fixed-term contracts or sourced from profit-making teacher supply companies.”

The American KIP schools may provide some insights into how the working lives of teachers in free schools might change. There, teachers are expected routinely to work long hours including evenings and weekends.

At the moment, state-funded schools are not allowed to make a profit from children’s education but that is likely to change. Education secretary, Michael Gove, has indicated that he has “no ideological

objection” to firms making profits from running schools.

Chris Keates, general secretary of the NASUWT, said: “Free schools are going to be an engine for private companies to move into the education business. The situation is also ripe for some independent schools to move in to shore up their balance sheets at the expense of the taxpayer.

“But the biggest concern must be that waiting in the wings will be corporate interests – waiting for schools to be set up and offering services to these schools, with no control or regulation. This policy is not about giving more power to local people. It is a policy of centralism and corporatism.”

Dr Roach described the free schools programme as a means of “bringing an education voucher system in through the back door”.

Under the government’s free schools programme, existing independent schools are able to apply for conversion to become a free school and as a result would be entitled to taxpayer funding for school places.

Questions have also been raised about how the policy will be funded and whether the £50 million identified so far by the government would be sufficient. The Department for Education said sufficient funding would be allocated after the spending review in the autumn, once it becomes apparent how many schools may open in 2011.

Professor Alan Smithers, director of the Centre for Education and Employment Research at the University of Buckingham, said the typical cost of converting an existing building into an average-sized school of 1,000 pupils would be about £2.5 million, while to build a new school from the ground would cost up to £30 million.

He said: “£50 million is not a realistic figure. It seems to me that the Conservatives out of office came up with a gimmick and they are now struggling to turn it into reality.”

But leaving aside issues over funding, is the Swedish model really one to which English schools should aspire?

Research from Dr Susanne Wiborg of London University’s Institute of Education found that the flagship coalition government policy to transform the country’s schools would bring little or no improvement in pupils’ results but would lead to a “significant increase” in public spending.

Dr Wiborg found that even in Sweden free schools increased segregation. They tend to be based in rich, urban areas and middle-class parents take their children out of community schools to attend them.

She also discovered that while free schools improved pupils’ results at the age of 15 or 16, there was no difference in results between free school pupils and children at other schools by 18.

She said: “The advantage that children have by the age of 16 is not translated into greater achievements later in life as they score no better in the final exams at age 18 and 19. They are no more likely to participate in higher education.”

Dr Wiborg found that local authorities had to pay for surplus school places and that the planning which went into allocating student places had become complex and expensive.

# Schools set for tough times

The swingeing cuts to the education budget have already had a wide-reaching impact and more is yet to come. We look at what has happened so far and the impact on education

The coalition government has embarked on a rapid programme of public spending cuts in its first few weeks in office. In May, the Treasury announced that £6.2 billion would be slashed from departmental budgets before the end of this financial year. Further cuts await to be announced in the autumn's Comprehensive Spending Review and, at the time of writing, all government departments have been busily developing proposals for cuts of up to 40 per cent to be made from their total overall budgets. Education and schools are not immune from this.

The scale and pace of the cuts programme has taken some by surprise and doubts are being expressed about whether these cuts can be made without adversely impacting on the quality or availability of education and other public services. Local authorities have also been left counting the cost of the cuts imposed and analysing what this will mean for the provision of education and children's services in their areas.

The Local Government Association, the body representing local authorities, has estimated that the government's decision to axe projects under the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme will leave local councils with a bill in excess of £160 million. Companies in the private sector have also been affected as a result of cancelled contracts, with widespread job losses predicted.

Darren Cooper, the leader of Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, failed to persuade education secretary Michael Gove to reverse his decision on scrapped BSF projects in the West Midlands authority when the two sides met in August.

He said: "The bottom line is that Building Schools for the Future is vital to the continuing transformation of education in Sandwell and the life chances of thousands of our young people. Nothing can be more important than that."

He added that Sandwell was taking legal advice over the decision to scrap the planned

£120 million investment in the borough's schools and the "flawed way it seems to have been taken".

Cutting the budget deficit is the number one priority for the coalition government and as well as the axing of BSF, it has committed itself to abolishing many of the existing non-departmental public bodies.

One of the first organisations to go was Becta. The Department for Education estimates that abolishing Becta will save around £80 million this year.

However, the government's decision has caused huge disappointment and concern. The worry is that Becta's expertise in such areas as standardisation of technology platforms, virtual learning and e-safety could be lost to the system when the organisation closes and that this could cost schools dear, both in terms of money and time.

Becta officials said the quango saved schools more money than it cost to run. It was estimated that for every £1 spent on Becta, £4 was saved to the education system.

The £200 million Harnessing Technology Grant, which pays for improvements in broadband connectivity and computer hardware in schools, has also been cut, largely paying to enable the implementation of the government's free schools policy.

Becta's chairman Graham Badman said: "Naturally we are very disappointed at the government's decision. Our procurement arrangements save the schools and colleges many times more than Becta costs to run. Our Home Access programme will give laptops and broadband to over 200,000 of the poorest children."

Pre-legislative announcements have also been made to secure the closure of the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) and the General Teaching Council for England (GTCE).

Unlike Becta, which was a non-statutory body, the QCDA and GTCE are statutory bodies and their closure requires a change of legislation. However, in the case of the statutory functions discharged by each of



The government should ask itself whether its determination to have 23,000 individual spending units is the best and most cost-effective way to administer the system. Local authorities should also be used more to ensure that economies of scale are delivered across the system

these bodies, the government has made no decision on whether these functions will continue or not. If they do, the savings to the taxpayer will be much smaller than originally stated.

The QCDA has an annual budget of £128 million, employing 500 staff. In a letter to Christopher Trinick, the QCDA's chairman, Mr Gove said he did not believe that the government or its agencies should be involved in curriculum design, "which is properly the domain of awarding bodies".

Mr Gove said that some of the quango's work should continue, such as the administration of SATs for key stage 2 pupils. The letter said: "We currently envisage that the functions and the people that support the tests would be needed after closure."

Mr Gove also said that QCDA staff working on the 14 to 19 Diplomas would be needed "until these activities are no longer required or can be transferred".

The letter continued: "In other areas, notably qualifications development and the curriculum, I would want the QCDA to withdraw as soon and as far as is practicable, and continue with activities only where it is necessary in order to comply with a statutory duty or where I am clear that not to do so would jeopardise the interests of learners."

The GTCE is another casualty of the coalition government's cuts. Mr Gove said he was "deeply sceptical" of the GTCE's purpose and benefit to teachers, and believed it did "little to raise teaching standards or professionalism".

The GTCE is responsible for registering teachers and investigating alleged cases of misconduct.

Mr Gove said the quango took more than £36.50 each year from every teacher and gave them "hardly anything back".

Any saving from the abolition of the GTCE may, however, need to be diverted to a new body which would administer the statutory professional registration and regulation functions currently discharged by the GTCE.

Chris Keates, general secretary of the NASUWT, said: "For years, we have been warning the GTCE that it was failing to gain the respect and confidence of the profession, or to act appropriately in the public interest.

"Too much time, energy and resource has been frittered away on pursuing projects and issues which duplicated the work of other bodies and did little or nothing to enhance the status of the profession.

"However, this does not override the need for an independent body to be responsible for professional registration and regulatory matters.

"It would be wholly unacceptable and invidious to leave professional regulation to the whim of individual schools or to revert back to a system in which there could be wholesale political interference."

Elsewhere, the Training and Development Agency for Schools has had its budget cut by £30 million, while the National College for the Leadership of Schools and Children's Services will be receiving £16 million less and the Children's Workforce Development Council is facing cuts of £15 million.

Meanwhile, in a letter to Ed Balls, the shadow education secretary, Mr Gove said he wanted to protect frontline services by "making tough decisions elsewhere".

His letter contained a list of more than 40 areas where he plans to make cuts and savings.

One of the biggest losers will be the one-to-one tuition budget, where savings of £47 million will be made.

Other areas hardest hit include 14 to 19 education, Diplomas, primary curriculum, gifted and talented provision, and extended schools.

ContactPoint, the national child safety database, has also been axed, alongside the Home Access scheme, which aimed to subsidise access to ICT equipment for children in low-income households.

Additional funding for one-to-one tuition in maths and English has also been scrapped, alongside the Every Child a Reader and Every Child a Writer programmes.

Ms Keates added: "Such swingeing cuts are not inevitable and they are not acceptable.

"There is an alternative to cuts, but establishing academies and free schools means the most expensive model is being used for purely ideological reasons.

"There is no slack to cut in schools. The government should ask itself whether its determination to have 23,000 individual spending units is the best and most cost-effective way to administer the system.

"Local authorities should also be used more to ensure that economies of scale are delivered across the system. It is a complete nonsense to suggest that these cuts will not affect frontline services."

# Analysing the Bill

The Education Bill will introduce a pupil premium and a new reading test and will see changes to key stage 2 testing and the curriculum

**A**n Education Bill scheduled for the autumn is expected to signal changes in the way teachers do their job and for the curriculum.

The government says that it wants to give teachers greater flexibility and freedoms in the classroom. However, that is unlikely to mean that the days of political meddling in the curriculum are at an end.

Education secretary, Michael Gove, has already specified that he believes all pupils should be taught British history and that synthetic phonics is the most effective way to teach reading.

Nick Gibb, the schools secretary, in a speech to the Reform Conference in July also outlined his preferences for what should be taught in schools.

He said: "Without understanding the fundamental concepts of maths or science it is impossible properly to comprehend huge areas of modern life. It is the duty of schools to provide each child with the knowledge and skills requisite for academic progress."

Decisions to dismiss the expert recommendations of the Rose Review of the primary curriculum and plans to abolish the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency – the independent body responsible for the curriculum – have been justified by ministers on the grounds of giving trust and power back to teachers.

However, some commentators have argued that the government's plans reveal a centralising tendency and that ministers are assuming control over how teachers teach and what they teach, a view given further weight following comments by Mr Gibb recently, who said: "We need to sharpen our focus on the core business of teaching at every level, starting with the basics. In particular, reading. So we are determined to focus on ensuring that reading is taught effectively in primary schools."

"We want to restore the national curriculum to its intended purpose – a core national entitlement organised around subject disciplines. So we will slim down the curriculum to ensure that pupils have the knowledge they need at each stage of their education, and restore parity between our curriculum and qualifications, and the best the world has to offer."

Mr Gove has confirmed that "externally



validated" key stage 2 tests will remain as "a robust and consistent source of information for parents" at the transition point between primary and secondary school.

League tables are also set to remain, despite claims that the accountability system skews the curriculum in schools, though quite how this will tally with ambitions for a more flexible curriculum remains to be seen.

No announcement has yet been made on another of Mr Gove's pre-election ideas that the timing of key stage 2 tests should be moved to the start of year 7.

Prior to the General Election, the Lib Dem leader Nick Clegg (now deputy prime minister) said that he wanted SATs "scaled back" and to see children spending less time doing tests and more time "learning creatively". However, this has not stopped the coalition government from pressing ahead with the introduction of yet more tests.

Picking up what was promised in the Conservative Party's General Election manifesto, the government has confirmed that new reading tests will be introduced for all six-year-olds.

## The pupil premium

Schools are to receive a "pupil premium" for teaching the most disadvantaged children, according to government plans to change the way schools are funded. The additional payments are intended to help tackle the "significant underachievement" of disadvantaged pupils compared with their peers, Mr Gove has said.

Exact details of the funding, including how to determine which children attract the premium and how much schools are likely to receive, is yet to be decided. A consultation on the pupil premium was announced just as schools broke up for the start of the summer holiday.

The promise of extra money for disadvantaged pupils has been widely welcomed, but there are some concerns. Chris Keates, general secretary of the NASUWT, said: "The proposed new pupil premium is unlikely to result in additional money going to the most disadvantaged pupils in the system. If these pupils are currently attending schools in areas that receive a higher level of pupil funding per capita, these pupils might not attract any additional funding at all.

"We are also concerned that there are no safeguards around how the pupil premium is to be used. The money will not necessarily follow the pupil once it gets into a school."

Conor Ryan, political commentator and former advisor to David Blunkett when he was education secretary, said: "Unless a pupil premium is wholly new money, is linked to strong outcome measures related to social mobility and to a much more equitable approach to school admissions, it is unlikely to achieve its objectives."

The School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document is an historic agreement protecting teachers' pay. However, there are concerns that this document is now under threat from the coalition

The School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD) provides the national framework governing the employment of teachers and headteachers in England and Wales. It provides a basis for consistent employment practices across all schools and provides a clear framework of rights and responsibilities for the teachers and headteachers who work in schools.

Under the coalition government, the future of the STPCD is under threat. The government has pledged as part of its programme to reform what it calls a "rigid" national framework to create more flexibility for schools in terms of how they employ and reward their staff.

Ministers have also signalled that they would like to make changes to the STPCD without reference to the independent School Teachers' Review Body (STRB), from which teachers have benefited considerably. A first proposition has been to bypass the STRB in order to allow the government to impose an arbitrary limit on the pay of school leaders. Decisions on such matters are likely to be highly significant and the future role of the STRB has been strongly defended by all teacher unions.

Elsewhere in government, the Hutton Review on fair pay is well underway. Schools have been initially excluded from this review. Chris Keates, the NASUWT's general secretary, said: "The exclusion of schools from this Review raises serious questions. If transparency and fairness of salary levels are important principles governing public sector pay, then there can be no credible rationale for excluding from the Review the comparative pay levels between headteachers and other staff."

However, critics say that one of the most serious threats to the future pay and conditions of teachers comes from the creation of academies and free schools.

The government has promoted academies and free schools on the grounds that they would be exempt from the national pay and conditions frameworks for teachers and headteachers.

This would effectively mean that pay and conditions would be subject to market forces with more power given to individual headteachers and governing bodies. A further consequence of this development would see potential increases in working hours as academies and free schools would be encouraged to work during the evenings and



weekends. Ms Keates continued: "Currently, the government uses independent schools as a touchstone for reform in the public sector, but that ignores important differences between schools in the private and public sectors, not least the higher level at which some private schools are funded."

The union's members fear that an arbitrary approach to pay and conditions would depress the value of teachers' salaries overall and result in unscrupulous and discriminatory practices in relation to the operation of pay and reward systems.

However, despite these fears, the government has agreed to honour the final year of the three-year pay award for teachers, meaning that teachers' pay received an across the board increase of 2.3 per cent from September.

However, while this is welcome news for teachers for this year, a two-year pay freeze for teachers and other public sector workers will take effect from 2011.

The pay freeze also comes on top of changes announced in the chancellor's emergency budget which will mean that the value of teachers' and other public sector workers' pensions will be reduced as a result of changing indexation to the generally less advantageous Consumer Prices Index (CPI) measure of inflation, rather than the existing Retail Prices Index (RPI) measure.

Forecasts predict this will mean that thousands of pounds will be wiped off the value of individual pensions even before the independent review set up by the government to look at the future of public sector pensions has produced its report.

Also under serious threat is the long-fought-for entitlement for all teachers of guaranteed planning, preparation and assessment time (PPA). The government has refused to confirm that the current

entitlement to PPA time will be secure as a result of its reform programme.

Dr Patrick Roach, deputy general secretary of the NASUWT, said: "It seems to be the perception of some politicians that PPA time is half a day off for teachers, rather than essential professional time.

"Teachers remark all the time that PPA has transformed their working lives and leaders say how teachers are more focused on teaching and learning and more able to commit to the challenges of teaching in the classroom. PPA time contributes directly to raising standards which would be jeopardised if that contractual entitlement were to be removed.

"There seems to be a view by this government that PPA means free time and that if teachers are not standing in front of a class they are not being productive. This view needs to be challenged. PPA is about delivering high educational standards."

Support for teachers has also come under threat as government funding to access formal training and qualifications for higher level teaching assistants (HLTAs) has been withdrawn. It is feared that without funding to develop new and existing school support staff, there is a risk that fewer support staff will be employed by schools to work alongside and to support classroom teachers.

Christina McAnea, head of education at Unison, said: "The government is playing fast and loose with children's educational needs. What schools desperately need are more teaching assistants trained to HLTA level. Now they are being told there is no money available.

"There is a clear need for more teaching assistants to be trained to a higher level. All too often, teaching assistants are being called on to cover for absent teachers without enough training."

# How are you going to be measured?

The coalition has promised to change the way Ofsted inspects schools, and while refusing to scrap league tables, has promised to reform them. What can we expect?

**A**lmost 3,000 secondary, primary and special schools have been told they will escape routine Ofsted inspections under the coalition's education plans. Instead, education secretary, Michael Gove, has stipulated that the schools' watchdog is being asked to target "areas of failure".

He explained: "Outstanding schools will be freed from inspection, but if there are certain indicators that flash danger then it will be triggered and there is always the parental request for an inspection if there are problems as well."

Measures to reform Ofsted, and free 2,000 secondary schools, 600 primaries and 300 special schools from inspection, are expected to form part of an Education Bill to be published in the autumn.

Quite how the new inspections regime will operate or how the outstanding schools will be monitored has yet to be thrashed out. But it is anticipated that it will build on a plan initially suggested by the Conservative Party in October 2009 and would be based on a red-amber-green traffic light monitoring of schools.

The system, it was suggested, would show if a school was deteriorating. Mr Gove said freeing up Ofsted would give more time for "no notice" visits, allowing inspectors to spend more time in failing schools.

A spokesperson for Ofsted indicated that the new framework for inspections, launched last September, was already focusing more on weaker schools, while outstanding schools were being seen once in a period of up to five years, rather than three as before.

The education secretary said the change to Ofsted might require "one or two legislative" tweaks.

He added that the new government remained committed to using league tables to judge school performance and may even rely on them more heavily with fewer Ofsted inspections.

Mr Gove said: "It is a change in focus. The accountability that we envisage will be



sharper, more precise and more intelligent. I know this will make me unpopular, but we are going to keep – albeit reformed – league tables, so we have accurate data that will allow us to make valid school-by-school comparisons.

"When we say comparisons, that means looking seriously at how things like contextual value-added scores are calculated. What we absolutely have to have is public, objective data about how schools are performing."

He added that this was the price that schools would have to pay for increased autonomy.

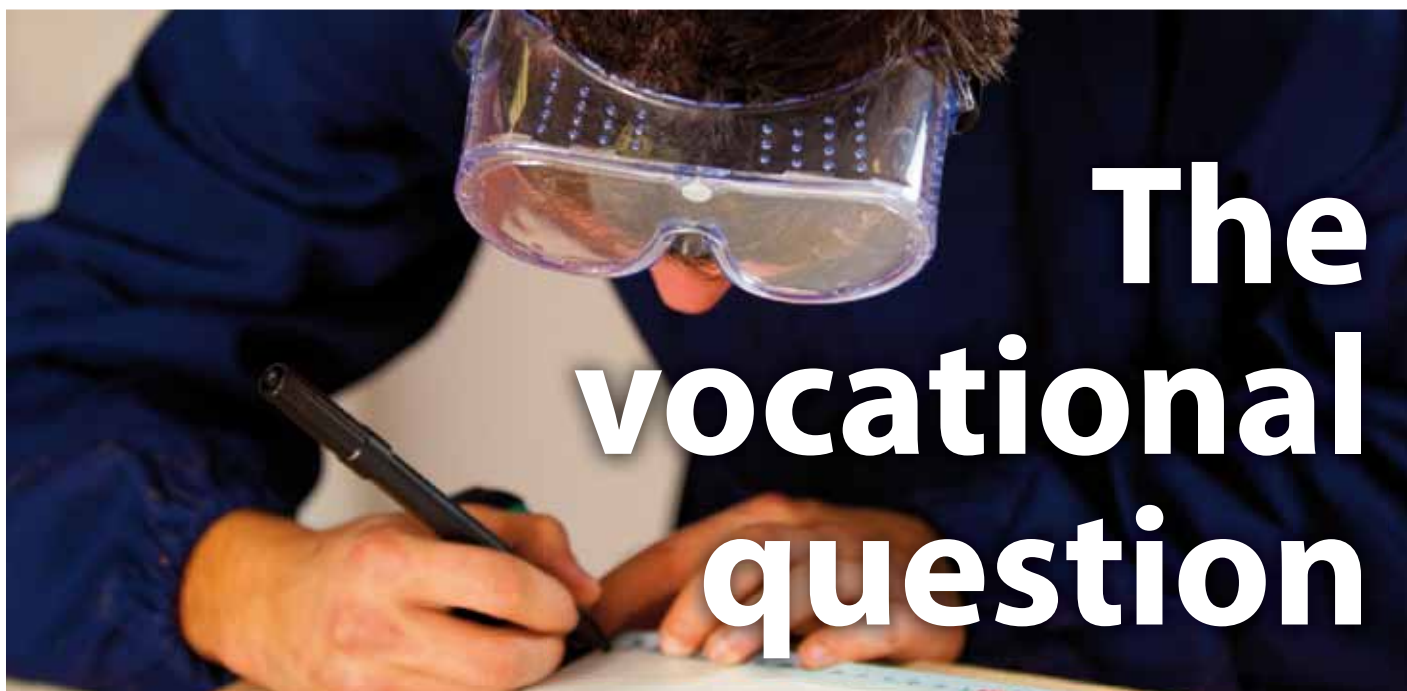
Chris Keates, the NASUWT's general secretary, warned that the government's promise of greater freedom for the best

schools was not necessarily what it seemed. She continued: "Outstanding schools, academies and free schools will continue to be subject to inspection. They will have 'health checks' and they can be inspected as a result of parental complaints.

"This is nothing to do with 'freeing' schools. It is an unobvious attempt to encourage more schools to sign up for academy status.

"It is no coincidence that this announcement was made at the same time as outstanding schools received the invitation from the secretary of state to apply to become academies.

"Sensible governing bodies will immediately see through this transparent attempt to boost interest in a policy to dismantle state education."



# The vocational question

Among the lesser publicised of the coalition plans are the proposals for technical academies to deliver vocational education. We look at how these will work and also the future of the 14 to 19 Diplomas

The coalition government's plans to introduce a new type of school, known as technical academies, have been largely overshadowed by other announcements, but it is an important symbol of the new government's vision for schools.

Lord Baker, the former Conservative education secretary under Margaret Thatcher, has led the Tories' thinking in this area. His vision is of technical colleges for 14 to 19-year-olds which would be established under the academies programme.

Technical academies would be focused principally on delivering vocational qualifications. This has been welcomed by some business leaders, but has raised questions in a number of other areas.

The policy of technical academies which appeared in the Conservative Party General Election manifesto, reappeared largely unnoticed in the coalition government programme. It said: "We will improve the quality of vocational education, including increasing flexibility for 14 to 19-year-olds and creating new technical academies as part of our plans to diversify schools provision."

The policy is expected to create a clear divide between academic learning for which schools will be responsible and other vocational routes. Indeed, it has not escaped the notice of some that the government has also scrapped the roll out of academic Diplomas which would have enabled many more pupils in schools to benefit from a mix of vocational and academic learning.

Dr Patrick Roach, deputy general secretary at the NASUWT, said that he was concerned that "the policy direction seems to be to

separate the sheep from the goats, signalling a return to a two-tier system of education".

He added: "I'm concerned that the government's approach risks opening up the divide between academic and vocational learning rather than securing genuine parity of esteem."

It is understood that, initially, the technical academies will be targeted to inner city areas with one of the first expected to open within two years in the West Midlands, based upon collaboration with Aston University.

According to the university's website, "students will have the opportunity to work with Aston University engineering staff and students as well as local and national industry."

"The academy will work closely with further education colleges including Birmingham Metropolitan College and secondary schools across Birmingham to create clear progression routes to further and higher education or directly into industry."

Students attending the technical academy will take GCSEs in core subjects including English, mathematics and science, along with practical courses such as engineering and manufacturing.

Lord Baker, who is also the chair of Edge, the vocational education lobby group, wants government to set up a national network of 100 technical academies (also known as university technical colleges – UTCs) in the next five years.

Among the universities interested in participating are Wolverhampton, Salford, Bradford, Hertfordshire, Leicester and Loughborough.

These academies are expected to specialise

in product design, sport and health sciences, construction and building support services, land and environmental services, and hair and beauty.

Meanwhile, the coalition has dropped phase four of Diploma delivery, which was to have been implemented in September 2011 and would have included academic lines of learning, including humanities, science and languages. Many believe that the move, which the government says will save more than £20 million, effectively spells the end for the Diploma.

Nick Gibb, the schools minister, said: "We will devote our efforts to making sure our existing qualifications are rigorous, challenging and properly prepare young people for life, work and study."

In July, ministers scrapped the 14 to 19 Gateway process, removing the opportunity for further school and college consortia to gain government approval to deliver the Diplomas from 2012.

Maggie Walker, deputy chief executive at the awarding body Asdan, which specialises in skills qualifications, said there was great concern within the education sector about the future of vocational education.

"Technical academies have a part to play in the system if they are seen as part of the whole, and are open to everyone because they have parity with other types of schools," she said.

"I am not convinced this is the government's thinking, however. There is a real danger that these schools, and the Diploma, will be perceived as being for the kids who are not capable of doing anything else."

These concerns are shared by Dr Roach. He said: "We would want to see these technical schools being required to provide a broad and balanced curriculum."

"Our concern, though, is that the technical academies will create an even more multi-layered system than we have presently. This must not be used as a mechanism to turn out young people to be used as labour market fodder."

## We look at the reaction from school leaders to the coalition government's policies and reforms

The start of each new school year brings a flurry of excitement and apprehension, and not only for the new intake of pupils. But, the start of the first full academic year under the coalition government is also giving rise to anxiety for headteachers and teachers in schools.

Among the legislation that has caused concerns is that allowing schools to become academies and effectively leave the control of local authorities, which will potentially have far-reaching implications for services across the system.

Crucially, there is also grave concern about school funding. Budgets may be protected for this year, but it is not clear what will happen beyond that.

We spoke to four headteachers about some of the key issues facing primary and secondary schools in the coming year.

### Primary schools

Aside from budgetary implications, one of the biggest concerns in primary schools will be around staffing and working conditions.

Michael Gove, the education secretary, has already withdrawn funding for the training of any more higher level teaching assistants (HLTAs). At the same time, his assertions

is why the training for HLTAs has been withdrawn. We won't need them if we have no money to employ them, will we?

"I dread to think what impact all of this will have on my teaching staff. Morale and job satisfaction noticeably improved with the workload agreement and I had one teacher who was planning to leave the profession but ended up staying because having a teaching assistant and PPA time transformed her working day. She is an excellent teacher and to lose people like her from the profession would be just terrible."

### Primary school headteacher Pupils on roll: 450

This head admitted he had briefly considered applying to become an academy, but has changed his mind – for the time being at least. The large primary is an outstanding school, which enjoys excellent relationships locally with other schools.

He explained: "It seemed like an attractive proposition and I spoke about the prospect briefly and privately with my chair of governors. We quickly realised that the implications would be potentially devastating on so many fronts.

"We do a lot of collaborative work with other schools, including a special school, and we just don't know how this might change if we left the control of the local authority. Also, we are in a good authority and the thought of playing a part in potentially breaking it up weighs heavily on us."

There were also funding considerations. He continued: "The council provides us with many centrally funded services which are crucial to the wellbeing and academic

# View the c



It seemed like an attractive proposition and I spoke about the prospect briefly and privately with my chair of governors. We quickly realised that the implications would be potentially devastating on so many fronts

*Primary headteacher on academy status*

that he wants teachers to be in front of the class suggests that the half-day or so primary teachers currently have for planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) may be in jeopardy.

### Primary school headteacher Pupils on roll: 220

"My biggest concern is the budget and how this may impact on my staff.

"If our budgets are cut it can only mean one thing – I will have to get rid of staff. I don't know where else I can make any savings, as we are already cut to the bone.

"I am loathe to even consider it at this stage and we have to live in hope, but we can't shed teaching jobs, so classroom assistants may be among the first to have to go. I get the feeling the government is planning along these lines anyway which

achievement of our pupils. We have no idea if the government will provide us with enough of a budget to buy these in ourselves, without relying on these economics of scale that the local authority provides.

"So, there are still too many question marks hanging over the whole academy business. We have ruled it out for now until we can see how things pan out, or if indeed this government survives."

### Secondary schools

Funding considerations and the prospect of academy status are also at the forefront in the minds of secondary school heads.

As in primary schools, headteachers and governors may need to look at staffing levels if budgets do not meet requirements in the immediate future.

A change of status may be tempting, but

there are currently no guarantees that funding levels in academies or free schools will meet those required to buy in services. Many heads simply do not know how best to proceed to do the right thing for their pupils.

### Secondary school headteacher Pupils on roll: 1,200

"I haven't yet heard anyone give us guarantees of sustained funding and so at the moment, academy status is just not something we can consider until we know what the bigger picture will be. They have talked about a pupil premium but no-one knows yet how much that will be.

"Our school is part of a large and well established consortium which is delivering Diplomas in all lines of learning. Take-up of the qualification has been relatively high in an area where manufacturing remains

# from halkface



strong and there is reasonable demand for a motivated and skilled workforce.

“Relationships within our partnership are excellent, but it would only take one school to become an academy to blow the whole thing apart. So far there is no suggestion that anyone plans to do this but I must admit I am increasingly looking over my shoulder to see what everyone else is up to.

“It is such a pity this is happening. I am very worried about the future of Diplomas. We are putting a large number of students through them, but I am concerned what currency this examination will have by the time they’ve completed it, or whether we should even be promoting uptake to future cohorts.”

**Secondary school headteacher**  
**Pupils on roll: 1,000**

There are also other funding considerations for secondary schools. This headteacher described how the abolition of Becta and £200 million cuts to the Harnessing Technology Grant may affect the education of his students.

“We are a large school in a fairly deprived area. Many of our students don’t have access to good technology at home, and rely on school to do their homework and use our resources.

“We were planning a major upgrade of our computer facilities in the next couple of years, but we don’t know yet how we will go about this without Becta, who were giving us a lot of help and advice.

“It’s not at all clear to me what will happen next, and whether we will now have to pay commercial rates for equipment. If so, then we may have to delay the upgrade or abandon

it completely, as I’m not sure we will be able to afford it.”

The school has also implemented several initiatives aimed at raising standards and improving attendance and behaviour. Teachers have been trained to use methods such as Assessment for Learning, for example, and the school has been using one-to-one tuition, which has already been planned and budgeted for the coming year.

“It’s not that these programmes have created jobs as such, but they have required professional development which we have invested in. They also require funding to be sustainable over the long term, and we have improved both attendance and results because of them.

“I am concerned about how much money we will have in the future for things like this if budgets are squeezed.”



### Further information

#### Department for Education

The new-look Department for Education is regularly updating its website with the latest policy announcements and updates. The site includes sections on the academies and free schools programmes, as well as information on the proposals surrounding the national curriculum. It is worth keeping a regular eye on this site as many decisions have been published here without formal announcement, such as the decision to abolish the General Teaching Council for England.

Visit: [www.education.gov.uk](http://www.education.gov.uk)

#### Championing Education

The Championing Education campaign examines in detail the nature, scope and impact of the coalition government's policy programme for schools and colleges. The campaign puts a spotlight on areas such as public sector pensions, teachers' pay and conditions, academies, free schools, curriculum and assessment and many others. The aim of the NASUWT campaign is to raise awareness and foster debate on the coalition government's programme.

Visit: [www.nasuwat.org.uk/championingeducation](http://www.nasuwat.org.uk/championingeducation)

#### The Coalition Programme

This document, which was thrashed out in the days after the General Election during negotiations between the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats, sets out the coalition government's manifesto for office. It is broken down into 31 sections covering areas including schools, social care, pensions, universities and further education, and families and children. The schools section includes 17 bullet points setting out the coalition's broad intentions for education. The document can be downloaded from the Cabinet Office website and a programme for government website has also been created.

Visit: [www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/409088/pfg\\_coalition.pdf](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/409088/pfg_coalition.pdf)

Visit: <http://programmeforgovernment.hmg.gov.uk/>

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