



Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State

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Chief Executives
and Directors of Children's Services
copied to Lead Members and Leaders

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Dear colleagues

Following my letter last month on the Academies Bill, I would like to update you on the latest development with our school reform agenda. Today I have announced the initial steps towards setting up the first Free Schools, and invited interested groups to come forward and start developing their proposals. These schools aim to tackle educational inequality and give greater powers to parents and pupils to choose a good school.

Under the plans it will be easier for groups to set up new schools in areas where there is parental demand as part of our shared objectives to improve parental choice and quality. We are working right across government to cut the red tape which has prevented new schools from being established – from planning regulations, to my Department's own school premises rules.

As part of this process, my officials – together with the New Schools Network – will work with a range of different groups who want to get involved to found the first Free Schools. These groups will need to show that they have strong educational aims and objectives for their new school and the ability and resources to deliver them. Groups will also have to comply with all aspects of a rigorous suitability and vetting test throughout the application process. By working with these pioneering groups, we hope to develop the policy and models to inform the development of future Free Schools. Alongside other checks, we will also engage local authorities to better understand the local context and circumstances before making a final decision on whether to support the establishment of a Free School.

We are committed to working with you to ensure local government continues to play a full strategic role in securing the improvements we all want to see. Strong local authorities are central to our plans to improve education and I hope you will continue to play the vital role of championing parents and pupils as we work in partnership to drive up standards in all schools.

Further information on the Free Schools policy can be found at www.education.gov.uk/freeschools.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Gove". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M' and a long, sweeping tail.

MICHAEL GOVE