

ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS AND LECTURERS

7 NORTHUMBERLAND STREET, LONDON WC2N 5RD TEL: 020-7930-6441 FAX: 020-7930-1359
e-mail: info@atl.org.uk web site: http://www.atl.org.uk VAT REG NO 539 0866 17
GENERAL SECRETARY Dr MARY BOUSTED B.A.(Hons) PhD



***Consultation on the DCSF Consultation: 21st Century Schools
Response from the Association of Teachers and Lecturers
February 2009***

ATL, as a leading education union, recognises the link between education policy and our members' conditions of employment. Our evidence-based policy making enables us to campaign and negotiate from a position of strength. We champion good practice and achieve better working lives for our members.

We help our members, as their careers develop, through first-rate research, advice, information and legal support. Our 160,000 members – teachers, lecturers, headteachers and support staff – are empowered to get active locally and nationally. We are affiliated to the TUC, and work with government and employers by lobbying and through social partnership.

ATL Policy

ATL's education policy is underpinned by the professionalism of teachers. Teachers should be recognised for their knowledge, expertise and judgement, at the level of the individual pupil and in articulating the role of education in promoting social justice. Development of the education system should take place at a local level: the curriculum should be developed in partnership with local stakeholders and assessment should be carried out through local professional networks. Schools should work collaboratively to provide excellent teaching and learning with a broad and balanced curriculum, and to support pupils' well-being, across a local area. This means that mechanisms must be developed that ensure a proper balance of accountability to national government and the local community, and which supports collaboration rather than competition.

ATL response

There are many admirable aims for children and young people contained within the DCSF's 21st century vision for schools, pupils and communities. However, the devil is, as always, in the detail and in the assumptions on which these aims are built. The document is somewhat lacking in joined-up thinking and there is little engagement with existing, evidenced concerns with aspects of the current education system on which many of these future aims are built. In our response, we raise constructive challenges to these aims based on current observations of our members, combining a wealth of

expertise and experience in schools, classrooms and communities and with pupils, parents and other professionals.

The DCSF *21st Century School vision* aims to focus on what every child and young person needs in order to succeed and on how this vision should apply to every school. ATL, of course, applauds this aim which is also meant to tackle the under-achievement which has been a chronic problem in education. However, we question the methods that this consultation document proposes. Our research and the feedback from our members around the country confirms that the pupils who are currently under-achieving are being failed at a systemic level, both in terms of inflexible elements of the current education system and a flawed understanding of the causes and therefore the remedies for the inequalities which blight the life chances of so many of our children and young people.

We know that the quality of a school only accounts for approximately 15 per cent variation in pupils' performance and that the brightest children in Britain's poorest homes are outperformed by the least gifted children from wealthy homes by the age of seven. The low attainment of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, therefore, is driven more by a combination of factors related to poverty and deprivation than by ability. A key difficulty in tackling this underlying problem of social exclusion is the government's perception, evident in the remedies it prescribes, that such exclusion is related to a random collection of individuals in poverty rather than to specific groups or people who are systematically disadvantaged due to structural inequalities.

ATL's vision of education for children and young people is founded on their development as physical, moral, social and intellectual beings. Central to this belief is the revitalisation of teachers' roles as professionals, equipped and empowered to lead a professional debate on learning and teaching. Part of this debate is about the role of education in meeting broader aims for our children and young people and the part which individual schools, as centres of teaching and learning, can play in this.

Based on members' combined expertise, experience and responsibility towards the education of our children and young people, ATL offers a constructive critique to the *DCSF 21st century school vision*, welcoming the direction towards further fulfilment of the *Every Child Matters* agenda, but cautioning against the narrowness and unsustainability of its approach which, by failing to recognise restrictive aspects of the current system, may doom the well-meaning proposals here to failure in tackling the persistent under-achievement and disengagement of many of our young people. It is also unfortunate that the vision is entitled '21st century schools' as its focus is rather about education at a systemic level, including the roles of other agencies within the system. Schools are a vital part of this vision, but they are not the only part and the contradiction between the title and its broader multi-agency focus is indicative of many of the contradictions within the document.

An urban vision..

This document reveals an official myopia around particular groups, where traditional perceptions of exclusion render them isolated and invisible. Although a majority of factors due to poverty and deprivation are similar for

urban and rural dwellers, ATL believes that the factors due to disadvantage and social exclusion are somewhat amplified for deprived rural households and hence for rural schools and colleges working to facilitate social mobility. Whilst urban poverty is highly visible and well documented, social exclusion in rural areas is rarely captured in official statistical data because of the dispersal of poor rural households and their often close proximity to affluence.

Many of the proposals in this consultation bring particular challenges to rural areas and yet these are not addressed within the document. ATL believes that any new government policies and educational initiatives must not only take into account the factors which present challenges for often better-resourced urban schools and colleges but also recognise the additional factors which seriously impact on implementation of initiatives in rural areas, for example, lack of alternative provision for excluded pupils owing to travelling distances, insufficient availability of apprenticeships and a lack of employer engagement and persistent recruitment problems particularly at senior levels, to name but a few. This latest initiative needs to include a comprehensive rural impact assessment, if it is to be truly aimed at what every child and young person needs in order to succeed.

Personalised Learning

Personalised Learning is offered as a key route to achievement in this document and yet the idea of personalised education for every young person is problematic. It should be recognised that 'personalised learning' as a concept did not arise from academic research, from grassroots practice nor from the larger education policy community. Indeed, teachers across the country already strive to meet the learning needs of all students. What ATL feels needs to be challenged within this concept is its concentration on the individual or very specific groups at the expense of the need for a systemic analysis and response to the challenge of under-achievement.

Furthermore, if personalised learning is to be delivered by the teaching profession, then they must be trusted to make professional judgements. Whilst we welcome the emphasis on more professional development opportunities for the school workforce, it is vital that teachers are given the opportunity to exercise their judgement, using their continually-developing expertise and experience, on matters of curriculum and assessment and meeting the needs of their pupils. If the government wants a more inclusive approach, it must give staff the autonomy to determine priorities. School staff must be allowed to make decisions about the curriculum, pedagogy and assessment appropriate for all their pupils to be able to approach what some will call personalised learning. Of course, this autonomy must be subject to accountabilities, but these need to be reduced and rationalised. Unfortunately, the current emphasis on personalised learning is as a tool to support particular strategies with little room for teacher autonomy to put it into effect and with little understanding of the broader social purpose of education.

This *21st century vision* is limited by its propensity to look to particular initiatives to take us forward rather than to engage with larger questions of what schooling is for and related matters such as our curriculum and assessment systems. ATL believes that we need to decide whether education is concerned with the whole person as a physical, moral, social and intellectual being or is it about the acquisition of a narrow range of skills and

knowledge, which are evidenced in a particular form, such as the written word, with diversionary tactics for those who cannot cope. We believe in the former; that all pupils should be entitled to access a broad and balanced curriculum and that the purpose of a National Curriculum is to set out the skills, attitudes and understanding which pupils need now and in the future for citizenship, lifelong learning, employment and caring roles.

In order to meet this need, we believe that the National Curriculum needs to be re-defined in terms of skills, that it needs to promote the 'whole' child, using the five *Every Child Matters* outcomes as a good starting point. As taught it should be designed locally, based upon a needs analysis which is set in the context of national entitlement and strategy but which is rooted in local circumstances; and it needs to be flexible, allowing more time for innovation and adaptation to local need.

To achieve the personalised learning experience for pupils that the DCSF's *Vision* outlines, there needs to be innovation and flexibility in the taught curriculum. However, our members are clear that there are many systemic barriers that discourage this. The key barriers which need to be recognised and addressed are as follows: the National Strategies which, due to their prescriptive nature, have stifled innovation and narrowly focused the primary curriculum on literacy and numeracy at the expense of the broader curriculum, including science and have had a narrowing effect on the teaching of English and Maths; the current testing and assessment regime, including the single-level tests currently being piloted, which narrows the taught curriculum, undermines the *Every Child Matters* agenda and demotivates learners; an excessive accountability framework which, through fears in schools of negative Ofsted reports or of a fall in place on the league tables, stifles innovation and creativity; and the current model of teachers as technicians, implementing the decisions of others, rather than as experts equipped and empowered to lead a continuing debate within their schools about curriculum, pedagogy and assessment.

As personalised learning, parent-involvement, workforce motivation and accountability are foci of this *21st century vision*, it is very disappointing that the current assessment system is not addressed more directly as it forms a significant barrier to the realisation of this vision. ATL shares the growing consensus that our current system of high-stakes testing is flawed due to its impact on learning and the questionable reliability of the inferences made from current outcomes. In addition, research and member evidence has demonstrated that the high-stakes national assessment system has a negative impact in that it narrows the curriculum and reduces flexibility in curriculum coverage; undermines the *Every Child Matters* agenda with a negative impact on pupil attitude and motivation; depresses staff morale and can lead to 'teaching to the test'; stifles creativity in teaching and learning, and; results in a lack of engagement with the subjects deemed to be more difficult. ATL's vision of a *21st century education system* involves teachers and learners participating more fully and meaningfully in assessment, with a greater use of Assessment for Learning approaches and with teachers at the heart at formative and summative assessment.

We not only question the current curriculum offer in terms of its flexibility, and relationship to the assessment system, but we are also concerned that many pupils do not have access to the broad and balanced curriculum to which they are entitled due to the obstacles that many schools and colleges

face, particularly in rural areas, in securing the foundations for such provision. A failure to engage with this reality undercuts the *vision's* aims to secure personalised learning for every child and young person.

Additional needs

We welcome the *vision's* emphasis on the identification of pupils' additional needs in this document although again we caution against the impact of our current targets and testing system on provision for pupils with additional needs. However, this focus is nonetheless appreciated and we hope that this is supportive of the government's drive to ensure the highest quality SEN provision for in schools for pupils with SEND needs. We expect that further proposals will build on the current work in the Lamb and Steer reviews, the intention of have an SEN champion in all schools with a place on the senior management teams and the SENCO training for all new QTS SENCOs.

Of course, disability and special educational needs are only a part of the additional needs demonstrated by children and young people in schools. These needs may require interventions which are beyond the scope and remit of education staff, requiring cross-professional collaboration. The role of the personal tutor must not become a catch-all, and it is vital that referral and joint working mechanisms are fit for purpose to ensure that additional needs are identified and appropriate interventions occur as quickly and efficiently as possible so that children and young people can learn and develop as they should.

Partnerships: Pupils, parents and community

The *21st century vision* document includes a welcome emphasis on partnerships; with pupils, parents, other schools, the wider community and other agencies. This is welcome as teachers and education professionals have long been clear that schools and colleges, by themselves, cannot achieve the kind of transformation in education in terms of pupil achievement in the broadest sense that society needs and indeed demands.

Pupils

The document's vision of children and young people's involvement in their education is a positive reinforcement of much of the activity already going on in schools and colleges to involve pupils increasingly as participants in their learning. Our members are clear that the benefits for pupils are significant where the increase in participation has been meaningful; pupils feeling increased self-confidence, empowerment and a greater sense of responsibility both for their own and other's behaviour and learning. And this all leads to improved learning. Teachers also welcome the insight that pupils bring to their own learning and preferences and the ideas they bring to lessons and to the life of the school.

However, this participation needs to be meaningful which presents a challenge to the current curriculum and assessment systems which leave little room for pupil input to have impact on practice. Assessment for learning (AfL) has pupil participation at its heart but the system's current focus on external tests which concentrate on levels offers pupils little in the way of feedback on their learning and strategies for going forward in their learning. In ATL's curriculum model of a slim, skills-based curriculum with the knowledge content developed locally to reflect local community needs, pupils,

as part of that community would have a role to play in the development of curriculum at school level.

ATL's enthusiasm for significant pupil participation is linked to our vision of teachers as professionals. Our members consider pupil reflection on learning as a tried and tested route to reviewing professional practice and supporting them to develop their practical knowledge through reflection and interaction. ATL is clear that this kind of professional review and reflection is almost impossible where teachers are subject to decisions and changes imposed from above, whether at school level or from government. If pupils are truly to participate in the life of the school, then teachers too must have the power to make decisions about the important business of the school.

The limitations around the use of 'pupil voice' must also be recognised. ATL opposes any imposition of methods of pupil feedback for monitoring and performance management purposes. ATL also believes that it is vitally important that pupil participation in decision-making must be properly managed and that it will be introduced differently depending on the ages of the children concerned.

We support the *Vision* document in this area with the caveat that pupil voice must contain responsibilities as well as rights. Any guidance on this must also recognise that schools are communities and the rights of those involved, either across or within groups can conflict and that participation involves addressing those conflicts. We see this as vital learning, for school life and for pupils' lives outside of school.

Parents

The personal tutor is not a new idea and most schools will have a designated member of staff as a point of contact for each child and their parents/carers. This is an important element in the building of relationships between school and home and we welcome this part of the vision. However, management of workload and bureaucratic burdens must be included in this aim, and demands around reporting must be reasonable and proportionate.

Our members are very clear about the need to raise the profile of learning with parents and to build mutual relationships of respect between staff and parents, although this is not always easy. We know that involving parents in the life of the school is a key part of that process and it is important that activities are designed around parent interest and need. Offering training courses and access to services through the school has worked well in many areas. Also, extending the pupil participation route to include methods by which parents can have an impact can work positively, provided that the same caveats apply; that rights are balanced by responsibility, that conflicts can be managed safely and constructively and that expectations are realistic.

However, parent relationships need to be balanced particularly in light of the parent choice agenda. This government has consistently championed parent 'choice' without any concern for its impact on community and for those who are less able to choose through the current system. The *Equity in Education: New Directions* report from the Centre of Equity in Education states that "*mechanisms of choice and competition have created a fragmented education system which, at best, reproduces existing social divisions, and at worst, may exacerbate them*". Crude systems for measuring deprivation do not meet this challenge in many areas, and 'many deprived neighbourhoods situated close

to comparatively affluent areas get overlooked' (Centre for Advanced Spatial Analysis). This agenda has also undermined school collaboration, which we will return to later in this response.

Parents play a key role in improving the educational achievement and life chances of their children but it is important that in devising strategies to increase their involvement positively, that they are based on experience, research including parent feedback and regional pilots. We await, with interest, the conclusions of the Lamb Review regarding parental confidence around SEND matters in schools.

Community

Schools already have strong community links and indeed need to meet the relatively new duty to promote community cohesion. ATL has already raised the challenges that schools face in building these links and promoting these duties, particularly in balancing the needs of groups and individuals, requiring a good understanding of their community vision and of their own equality duties. Communities are not homogeneous entities and it is vital that all state schools are supported, as part of collaborative networks and/or members of the local authority family, in developing constructive participative relationships with groups and individuals in the community, whether through the schooling of children and young people and related outreach work or through extended services provision.

It is important that we again raise the dissonance between the community and choice agendas and we are not alone in this: the Runnymede Trust *School Choice and Ethnic Segregation* Report highlights this clearly stating that "there is .. a tension between the pursuit of community cohesion with its 'common values of citizenship and ... good community relations' and the promotion of parental choice, with its pursuit of individualistic forms of success."

Collaborations

Collaborating schools

ATL strongly supports the idea of school collaboration but we feel that this consultation does not recognise many of the difficulties inherent in achieving this vision. The current culture of league tables and narrow targets is more conducive to a culture of competition than of collaboration and the increasing diversity in the school offer, eg academies and trust schools, and its impact on school admissions and exclusions often leads to very unequal distribution of challenges and of resources.

There are many different sorts of collaboration between schools, and ATL's vision of 21st century education has across-school and community collaboration at its heart. However, this commitment to partnership does not preclude our recognition of the difficulties experienced in its achievement in particular forms and in specific circumstances. Where collaboration involves a sharing of pupils, staff and/or resources across school-sites, many schools or colleges often encounter logistical and time-tabling difficulties, particularly in rural areas where there may be long travelling distances for pupils and staff to reach different sites. Discipline procedures and pastoral care systems may also vary between providers, with teaching staff reporting that details of collaborative arrangements are mostly decided amongst senior managers who might subsequently fail to communicate this information in full to their staff.

Multi-agency

ATL very much welcomes the *vision* document's focus on multi-agency working, a growing feature in the achievement of the Every Child Matters outcomes. Our members have expressed the urgent need for shared understandings across the education and other professional sectors concerned with the well-being of children, including professional language, objectives, roles, leadership and professional frameworks and the particular role and responsibilities of schools within that.

Other areas of concern in relation to building effective relationships across schools and agencies are routes of communication, clear allocation of responsibility and adequate financial provision. Suggestions for improvement made by members include the development of strict procedures and protocols with strict enforcement of review dates and a requirement to follow up referrals. Further clarity around the key worker scheme would be helpful, with an emphasis on the expertise and experience needed for this role. ATL members are clear that more time and funding needs to be given to support such working; not just for meetings, but also for across-agency staff training and to facilitate other forms of communication.

We welcome the emphasis on shared professional development particularly at leadership level, and we feel that this will be a key factor in achieving shared understandings at all levels. However, we caution that this must happen within a framework of clear role boundaries particularly in the contexts of lead professionals and extended services, remembering schools' core role as environments of teaching and learning.

Bureaucracy is another key issue in this area and many of our members have raised concerns with the unwieldiness of the current communication routes around expressing concerns about and accessing support for children and young people in need of additional support. For example, the CAF is found to be detailed and complex to the extent that it can delay schools in making referrals due to the work and time required to complete it.

Workforce

We welcome the DCSF's emphasis on initial training and professional development across the children and young people's workforce and on a strategic approach to recruitment, based on raising the professional profile of the sectors involved. However, it is vital that this ambitious programme is based on research, professional feedback and a series of evaluated pilots. The Masters in Teaching and Learning may well serve as an effective tool in building the profile of the teaching profession and placing an emphasis on continuing professional development (CPD) but we know from feedback from both new and experienced members, that it would be better timed at a later stage of a teacher's career, rather than within the first five years, when teachers already face steep learning curves in what is always a challenging, as well as rewarding, career.

This *vision* addresses the whole children's workforce and as a union representing members across the whole education workforce, including support staff, we consider it to be vital that an impact risk assessment is carried out on each staff group from any development for another. For example, we welcome the recent SENCO regulation stipulating that all SENCOs should have QTS within a few years, to further drive the SEN

agenda. However, we are concerned that the routes of gaining QTS for current non-QTS SENCOs have not been sufficiently addressed nor options for recognising a specific QTS-SENCO role where more general QTS stipulations might not apply (eg curriculum subject knowledge to degree level). Integrated working across multiple agencies will require a consistent level of joined-up thinking and a commitment to regular impact analysis and review across the roles.

ATL also rejects the consultation document's identification of CPD as the only aspect of professionalism which requires development. Review and reflection may be pointless in an environment where the teacher is or feels powerless to innovate, where decisions and changes are always imposed from above. The national bank of expertise will decline unless changes are made to restore proper autonomy. ATL members fully accept the need for proper accountability of public servants, but this requires rationalisation and rebalancing against the need for professional autonomy.

The governance of schools is included in this *21st century schools' vision* and to reflect that key role and the growing number of duties levelled at this group, ATL believes that governors need a status equivalent to that of the magistracy. This should include proper funding for expenses, mandatory training, and support from employers for governors to carry out their functions during working time. The DCSF *vision* also implies a significant sea-change in how school governing bodies should work. It is no longer appropriate to have many decisions made at individual school level. Rather, we advocate a model of local area governing bodies that decide education issues for their local areas and support schools to implement those decisions, based on school priorities, developing collaborative relationships within local areas.

Accountability

As a key driver of all that happens in the education system, ATL have significant concerns about our current system of accountability in terms of its impact, often negative, on teaching and learning. However, as accountability is a focus of measures within this *21st century* consultation, we will address it directly here. We have concerns about the Report Card measure but these need to be taken into the context of the overall accountability system and its current state.

The current accountability system is based on frequent high-stakes testing, including an ever-increasing number of targets with league tables and a residual fear of Ofsted adding heavy pressure to drive compliance with government initiatives and the National Strategies. The Report Card is designed to sit within this system to provide further information, beyond the narrowly academic, to the public on schools.

This proposed measure reflects a trend already noted within the accountability framework; Ofsted will shortly be inspecting schools on well-being indicators. While ATL believes that schools are accountable to pupils and parents for the broader curriculum which includes health, relationship, social and support issues, there is a big difference between accountability for practice and accountability for outcomes, particularly where the outcomes are outside the control of schools. There is also a wealth of difference between local accountability, and national comparisons and benchmarking.

Professional accountability implies commitment to evaluate and improve; it does not require a juggernaut of data collection and detailed comparison of schools.

The DCSF *vision* does not recognise that the current accountability system for schools encourages an insular and competitive approach, ensuring that each individual school does what it can to climb the league tables, and the proposed report cards do little to alleviate this. If we are to meet the needs of all children, then we must move away from the assumption that pupil well-being can be promoted school-by-individual-school. It is disappointing, therefore, that this approach to judging children's well-being commences at the level of individual schools and that the suggested Report Card will reinforce this. It could instead start by establishing measures of the well-being of individual children and young people, using these to derive appropriate higher level measures, or instead start from an attempt to establish the characteristics of successful Children's Trusts and Children and Young People's Plans, using these to derive appropriate lower level measures.

We believe that the measures proposed in the recent consultation on the well-being indicators by which schools will be judged do not reflect the high aspirations of the Every Child Matters agenda in general, nor of the new and emergent body of practice which has been developing in response to the creation of reciprocal duties to co-operate between agencies offering services for children. Responsibility for children's well-being cannot be placed on schools alone, but must instead be shared across local areas and services. The Report Card which is based at school-level may well recognise different aspects of pupil achievement beyond the narrowly academic but it does not address the issue of this shared responsibility, despite an emphasis in the *vision* on partnerships, particularly on multi-agency working.

Furthermore, the proposed well-being indicators, for example, are of outcomes, most of which will have many contributing factors, and with no real indication of the school's contribution. Both Ofsted publication of these 'outcomes' and their inclusion on the Report Card will reflect little of these contributing factors and are blunt instruments for such nuanced and complex areas.

ATL agrees that schools should be accountable for their contributions to aspects of pupil well-being. Professional accountability implies commitment to evaluate and improve. We do not agree that this accountability needs indicators, benchmarks and national comparisons. Instead, it would be better measured, validated and reported at a local level, through local validation of the school's self-evaluation.

Report Card

We have already begun to address some of our concerns about the proposed Report Card, in our overall criticism of the current accountability system, in which it will be situated. Much has been made of its success in the US and Canada but we would caution initially against 'policy tourism' that fails to fully recognise the impact of national and local contexts including the surrounding conditions that made it a success in particular locations.

We welcome any emphasis on a broader interpretation of pupil achievement, to include well-being, enjoyment, safety, health, making a positive

contribution and prospects of future economic well-being, truly reflecting the Every Child Matters agenda. However, the inclusion of these aspects of pupils' lives in crude measures will not mean their achievement in reality, as we stated earlier and there must be recognition that there are many other factors, outside the control of schools, which will play a significant role here.

The Consultation document outlines a number of areas to be included in the Report Card. The first two, "attainment" and "pupil progress", are already much reported upon and we have earlier raised concerns about the questionable value of much of the data. The data on the second two areas, "wider outcomes" and "narrowing gaps" is unlikely to be any more reliable and it is of concern that the document has made few proposals of what would actually be looked at under each measure. The "parents' and pupils' views" area needs further reflection and will require very careful management. As the emphasis in another part of the document is about building relationships of trust and respect where teachers, support staff and parents/carers share the common goal of pupil achievement and well-being, the inclusion of this aspect of the Report Card is contradictory, by emphasising the parent/carer as the user of a service rather than as an active participant in its delivery and chances of success.

Whether the score is numerical or given as an alphabetic grade is of little import; either is a crude measure, which will attract the eye of every reader, but, as we know from AfL research, will lead to less engagement with richer information about the school and its practice. The weightings of the categories will of course be revealing about the emphasis of government and will be used negatively in relative school rankings but as the measures are questionable and will contain elements of unreliability, they will not add anything to the knowledge of users. Although all the measures are problematic, we believe it vital to avoid an overall score, particularly if readers are to engage with deeper information about the school.

The intention for indicators to be outcome focused is contentious as some of those outcomes will be beyond the sole control of the school. It is interesting that processes in schools will not generally be used to make judgements yet surely the existence of appropriate processes will provide a safer indicator than outcomes, due to the aforementioned problems of external factors. The consultation states its intent that the indicators will be drawn from data that is objectively and externally verifiable yet does not address the validity and reliability of the inferences made from these assessments nor recognise the impact of high-stakes testing and high levels of test preparation rather than deeper learning.

We note that the government aim to avoid duplication of work with Ofsted and this report card and we welcome that intent. However, the annual report card will mean more work and bureaucracy, particularly at school level. We welcome the intent to review league tables in light of the Report Card and we urge their abolition, although we are not convinced that the Report Card will prove to have a less negative impact on school practice, in terms of stifling innovation and driving a negative target-focused, learning-impooverished education culture.

Extended services

The *21st century school vision* incorporates extended services, which have been a feature of the education scene for a long time although the provision is patchy across the country. ATL recognises the significant benefits they offer to children, based on our members' evidence. Extended services have been found to impact positively on pupil attainment, motivation, attendance, punctuality and behaviour. They also boost education and learning, increase engagement and motivation and remove barriers to attendance and achievement. Full service extended schools may also contribute to high levels of multi-agency working which in turn result in benefits to vulnerable children and their families.

ATL upholds the value of partnerships between schools, local authorities and other local agencies through extended services. However, ATL is concerned that it must not place unreasonable demands on headteachers and other members of school leadership teams, affect their workload and potentially detract from the core business of schools; teaching and learning. ATL recommends that local authorities take responsibility for leading, building, developing, resourcing and sustaining partnerships to deliver extended services in their areas.

ATL believes that if extended services offered by schools are configured as essentially local authority services, offered in partnership with schools, this could avoid additional administrative and management responsibilities which would otherwise be an additional burden for headteachers, governors, teachers and teaching assistants. ATL concludes that all extended services should be inspected as part of the LAs' area-wide inspections, rather than as part of school inspections.

We also need to recognise that schools in rural areas are experiencing considerable challenges in offering a range of curricular and extra-curricular experiences through extended services due to the specific factors we outlined earlier in this response.

Infrastructure

Academies

We noted, with concern, the praise within the *21st century vision* document of the academies programme. This 'success' is not uncontested and we urge against building on an unproven assumption of their efficacy as a model. While we welcome some recent changes with the Academy model, with the introduction of local authorities as sponsors in some cases, there are still fundamental issues in relation to their operation and their relationship with the local family of local authority schools. The DCSF continues to act in the place of a local authority, monitoring compliance with the confidential funding agreements with sponsors which control the behaviour of Academies. As the number of Academies increases this will become increasingly unsustainable and suffers the major defect of lack of transparency. Like maintained schools, Academies should be openly accountable to their local communities. This lack within the academies' model is a very visibly anomaly when set against the community and parent direction of this document. The introduction of the YPLA will not alter this democratic deficit.

Funding

ATL supports the funding formula review, and would welcome measures to incentivise partnership working between schools. However, the Government should remember why school funding has been ring-fenced. It should not attempt to fudge the boundaries between the budgets for schools and other children's services in an attempt to disguise the underfunding of the latter. This would be vigorously resisted by educationalists.

Building Schools for the Future

While we support a review of the school environment, including buildings, to support an education vision fit for this century, ATL has serious concerns about the sustainability of the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme which seeks to rebuild or refurbish all secondary schools in the England and install high quality Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as a means to transform learning and raise achievement, particularly in this economic climate. Not only has there been no specific reference to sustainability in the BSF launch document, but we also know that a majority of the school buildings, which have already been built or rebuilt by profit-making companies through Private Finance Initiative (PFI) building and maintenance contracts, are often of poor quality. Evidence has shown PFI to be costly and restrictive to schools and local authorities and we are concerned that its lack of sustainability will result in Local Authorities having to bear the further costs of 'rescuing' and re-integrating PFI schools in the future.

ATL believes that the marketisation of education is unsustainable and that there needs to be a fundamental reform of the Government's current education policies for sustainability to become a reality in our educational institutions and practices and beyond.

Sustainable schools

The *21st century schools vision* calls for schools to contribute to sustainable communities which necessitates a meaningful engagement with the concept of sustainable education. ATL believes that schools, colleges and universities have a crucial role to play in educating for a sustainable future and being themselves examples of sustainable values and practice. Educating for sustainability needs sustainable education. ATL is concerned, however, that most of our educational values, institutions and practices are based on an unsustainable model of education.

Within ATL's vision, sustainability is rooted in an understanding of the complex and interrelated environmental, economic, social, political and moral challenges our world is experiencing at present. It begins from a global perspective and is guided by universal values of equality, respect, empathy, dignity and justice together with a commitment to care and conserve arising from a sense of responsibility and shared destiny. This global perspective should inform and underpin any national, local and individual action in the creation of a sustainable society.

If our schools and colleges are to become genuinely sustainable places of teaching and learning, ATL believes that the time has now come to join up the dots. Sustainable education is only effective if it is closely linked to addressing

a range of concerns that have been consistently expressed by education staff and their unions, including calls for:

- an end to the marketisation of the education system;
- the abolition of the current high stakes assessment and testing regime;
- the transformation of an accountability system which undermines and devalues teachers' professionalism and professional autonomy;
- the reform of a narrow and overtly restrictive curriculum;
- opportunities for professional development and better career structures for all education staff and for other professionals involved in the well-being of children and young people;
- the meaningful and balanced involvement of pupils in decisions about their school or college and in determining the nature of their own learning; and
- a greater role for communities to be involved in their schools and colleges, including through representation on governing bodies and through their local authorities.

Conclusion

In 'joining up the dots', we offer ATL's vision of a sustainable education system for the 21st century. While we share some of the same principles and aims as outlined in the DCSF *vision*, we are concerned that achievement of these principles necessitates a transformation of the education system, with teacher professionalism and pupil learning at its heart.

Our vision is one based on the idea of sustainable education which has the *Every Child Matters* outcomes at its heart and would include the following principles: a curriculum that values creativity, innovation, critical thinking and pupil engagement, and promotes a global perspective applied to local circumstance; mutually supportive structures which value the professionalism of all staff involved with the education and well-being of children and young people; allowing pupils and students to take responsibility for important areas of their lives; and, collaborative and community working, including with parents/carers.

By sharing many of the same aims as government, we are committed to work together to achieve them, but we are concerned that many aspects of the current education system and infrastructure will militate against success in this aim and we urge for a more fundamental review of the current systems which undermine a richer vision of education and the goal of every child reaching their full potential.