

**Cash for working in tough schools**

**Good teachers are to be offered £10,000 in extra payments to encourage them to work in England's toughest schools.**

The proposals to boost achievement among disadvantaged pupils are part of the government's White Paper on increasing social mobility.

About 6,000 new teachers in 500 of the most challenging secondary schools will be offered the "golden handcuffs".

Prime Minister Gordon Brown promised to help people "make the most of their potential throughout their lives".

Introducing the New Opportunities, Fair Chances for the Future proposals, Mr Brown said that "a downturn is no time to slow down investment".

He said that the government's drive to raise standards in schools and to provide support for children in their early years would "lay the foundations of true social mobility and social justice".

**Disadvantage**

The White Paper suggests that the lowest achieving schools, often serving the most deprived communities, should have extra money to retain the most effective teachers.

Inner-city schools have often suffered from high staff turnover and a reliance on temporary teachers - and the proposals suggest a £10,000 loyalty payment in return for three years' service in the same school.

This will be available to the "National Challenge" schools, identified as those in which less than 30% of pupils achieve the benchmark of five good GCSEs including English and maths and those with more than 30% of pupils on free school meals.

As part of the effort to "break the link between disadvantage and achievement", the White Paper also calls for statutory targets for local authorities to improve the performance of pupils eligible for free school meals.

The proposals also emphasise the importance of support for children in their early years - promising £57m towards the longer term ambition to "make a free early learning and childcare place available to all two-year-olds".

There are also measures intended to offer training, against the background of uncertainty about jobs - including 35,000 extra apprenticeship places and a threefold increase in the availability of career development loans, which will be available to 45,000 people.

A £500 training allowance will be available for carers wanting to return to work.

The Conservatives' skills spokesman, David Willetts, said that a barrier to social mobility was the lack of an effective careers service, which could provide advice to disadvantaged pupils to help them achieve their potential.

"The careers service, which used to be so important, has been dismantled under this government and we are committed to putting it back together," said Mr Willetts.

**'Tinkering'**

Liberal Democrat schools' spokesman, David Laws, dismissed the plans as tinkering with a system which is in need of real reform".

"Ministers need to reform the unfair funding system so that schools in the most challenging areas get more cash to attract and, crucially, keep good teachers," said Mr Laws.

Teachers' unions also voiced doubts about the effectiveness of the financial incentives being proposed.

The National Union of Teachers warned that such cash bonuses might only have a "minor effect".

Spending money on cutting class sizes might produce a more long term improvement in performance, said the union's acting general secretary, Christine Blower.

Association of School and College Leaders head Dr John Dunford said: "While the £10,000 golden handcuff will be useful for the most challenging schools to recruit more excellent teachers, research shows that it is intervention at the earliest stage in a child's life that does most to improve its life chances and so increase social mobility.

"In particular, parenting classes with families most at risk should be the highest priority."

Chris Keates, head of the Nasuwt teaching union, said: "A £10,000 golden handcuffs offer is no substitute for a package of sustained support and reward for all teachers in these schools, particularly those who have already given years of dedicated service and commitment."