

# PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

HOUSE OF COMMONS  
OFFICIAL REPORT

First Delegated Legislation Committee

DRAFT COASTING SCHOOLS (ENGLAND)  
REGULATIONS 2016

*Wednesday 30 November 2016*

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**Sunday 4 December 2016**

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**The Committee consisted of the following Members:**

*Chair: MR JAMES GRAY*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| † Argar, Edward ( <i>Charnwood</i> ) (Con)                               | † Kane, Mike ( <i>Wythenshawe and Sale East</i> ) (Lab) |
| † Bingham, Andrew ( <i>High Peak</i> ) (Con)                             | † Leslie, Chris ( <i>Nottingham East</i> ) (Lab/Co-op)  |
| † Evennett, David ( <i>Lord Commissioner of Her Majesty's Treasury</i> ) | † Perry, Claire ( <i>Devizes</i> ) (Con)                |
| † Ffello, Robert ( <i>Stoke-on-Trent South</i> ) (Lab)                   | † Philp, Chris ( <i>Croydon South</i> ) (Con)           |
| † Gibb, Mr Nick ( <i>Minister for School Standards</i> )                 | † Turner, Karl ( <i>Kingston upon Hull East</i> ) (Lab) |
| † Gove, Michael ( <i>Surrey Heath</i> ) (Con)                            | † Warman, Matt ( <i>Boston and Skegness</i> ) (Con)     |
| † Grant, Mrs Helen ( <i>Maidstone and The Weald</i> ) (Con)              | † White, Chris ( <i>Warwick and Leamington</i> ) (Con)  |
| † Hayes, Helen ( <i>Dulwich and West Norwood</i> ) (Lab)                 |   |
| † Jones, Graham ( <i>Hyndburn</i> ) (Lab)                                |   |

Katy Stout, *Committee Clerk*

† **attended the Committee**

# First Delegated Legislation Committee

Wednesday 30 November 2016

[MR JAMES GRAY *in the Chair*]

## Draft Coasting Schools (England) Regulations 2016

2.30 pm

**The Minister for School Standards (Mr Nick Gibb):** I beg to move,

That the Committee has considered the draft Coasting Schools (England) Regulations 2016.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Gray.

Earlier this year Parliament debated and approved the Education and Adoption Act 2016, which for the first time gave the Secretary of State powers to identify, support and take action in coasting schools. It also placed a duty on the Secretary of State to set out in regulations what “coasting” means in relation to a school. The draft regulations, which were laid before both Houses on 20 October, fulfil that requirement.

The Government are dedicated to making Britain a country that works for everyone, not only the privileged few, which means providing a good school place for every child—a place that offers children the opportunity to fulfil their potential and to go as far as their talents will take them. Over the past six years, thanks to our reforms and the hard work of school leaders and teachers, nearly 1.8 million more children are in schools rated good or outstanding than in 2010, and it is a pleasure to see my right hon. Friend the Member for Surrey Heath, the former Secretary of State for Education, in the Committee.

Our free schools and academies programmes have meant that strong schools and school leaders have been able to extend their success more widely throughout the school system to open up a greater diversity of provision. Our new, rigorous national curriculum and redeveloped qualifications are equipping children with the knowledge they need to succeed. However, a good school place is still out of reach for too many children, so we know that there is more to do. Our coasting schools policy is about identifying schools, whether academies or maintained schools, that are not doing enough to help pupils fulfil their potential. We want to ensure that such schools have the support they need to make improvements so that every child has access to the best education.

To target support at the schools that need it most, we have developed the coasting definition set out in the draft regulations. The definition is clear, transparent and data-based so that schools will be in no doubt about whether they have fallen within it. It focuses on the progress that pupils make in a school, recognising the differences in intake by looking at the starting point of pupils rather than only their attainment. It considers performance over three years, so that we can identify and support schools that have struggled to stretch their pupils sufficiently over a number of years, not those that have simply suffered an isolated dip in performance.

The definition will identify those schools that are struggling to ensure that pupils reach their potential. It will allow the right support to be put in place so that they may improve and give pupils the excellent education they deserve. As the Committee can see, the three-year coasting definition contains interim measures for performance in 2014 and 2015, and new measures from 2016 onwards. That is because the accountability system against which performance in primary and secondary schools is measured changed in 2016. I am aware that that makes the coasting definition more complicated in 2016 and 2017, but that approach is fairer to schools. The coasting definition is therefore based on the measures that schools were already working to in those particular years. The definition will, of course, be simpler from 2018 when the interim measures no longer apply.

Subject to Parliament’s approval of the draft regulations, regional schools commissioners will identify and start to support the first coasting schools early in the new year, once the revised 2016 results are published. A school must be below the coasting thresholds in all three years—2014, 2015 and 2016—to fall within the overall coasting definition. A primary school will fall within the definition if in 2014 and 2015 fewer than 85% of pupils achieved level 4 or above in reading, writing and mathematics, and less than the national median percentage of pupils achieved expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics; and in 2016—

**Graham Jones (Hyndburn) (Lab):** The Minister has raised the crux of the 2016 Act, which I have raised previously. A coasting shire school with a great intake of pupils, such as in Hertfordshire or Buckinghamshire, is not going to fail the second of those assessments and be below the national median because its pupils will probably do quite well. What assessment has the Minister made of which schools will fall under the definition of coasting by indices of deprivation, demographic and urban geography?

**Mr Gibb:** The hon. Gentleman raises the issue of attainment in a primary school, so I assume his intervention is based on the primary school definition rather than secondary school definition, which is based purely on progress. We are unapologetic for including attainment as well as progress in the primary school measure, because it is important that every young person at primary school reaches a certain threshold of achievement if they are to succeed at secondary school.

In response to the hon. Gentleman’s specific question, where the schools that fall within the definition appear geographically and in terms of deprivation will become clear once the final figures for primary schools are published later this month. We will then see specifically which schools fall within the definition of coasting.

As I was saying, the regulations mean that a primary school will fall within the definition if in 2014 and 2015 fewer than 85% of pupils achieved level 4 or above in reading, writing and maths, and below the national median percentage of pupils achieved expected progress in reading, writing and maths; and if in 2016 fewer than 85% of pupils met the new expected standard in reading, writing and maths and the school’s progress scores were below minus 2.5 in reading or below minus 3.5 in writing or below minus 2.5 in maths.

A secondary school will fall within the definition if in 2014 and 2015 fewer than 60% of pupils achieved five or more A\* to C grades at GCSE, including English and maths, and below the national median percentage of pupils achieved expected progress in English and maths; and if in 2016 the school's progress 8 score was below minus 0.25.

That definition of coasting, with the exception of the thresholds for the 2016 progress scores, was first published in June 2015 and informed much of the debate and scrutiny during the passage of the Education and Adoption Bill in the first Session of this Parliament.

**Graham Jones:** I am grateful to the Minister for being candid. I understand that there is a bigger attainment element because there is no progress 8 in primary schools but, in secondary schools, there is an attainment level assessment. In years 2014 and 2015 the assessment is based on A\* to C GCSE grades. There is an attainment aspect of secondary school forced academisation because that is essentially what we are talking about. The proposed legislation is about forced academisation of working-class schools in working-class neighbourhoods. Is that not true?

**Mr Gibb:** To take the last part of the hon. Gentleman's intervention first, it is not about forced academisation. It is about ensuring that the eight regional schools commissioners can target additional support to those schools in whatever area of the country—north or south, wealthy or less wealthy—to ensure that they have the right support to ensure that every pupil in those areas fulfils their potential. It is about getting national leaders of education, and getting stronger schools to support schools that are not performing as well as they ought to be, to ensure that parents can be confident that when they send their child to a local school it is a good school. That is the objective of this Government and I am sure that that is his objective.

**Graham Jones:** I appreciate the Minister's sentiment, but I question the application. The right hon. Member for Surrey Heath, who is in the room, is a big advocate of academisation. That policy seems to be carrying on. I went to what might be described as a Conservative school. It was guaranteed to get 60%. Forty years ago when I was there, I thought it was coasting. Why should it be exempt? Under the 2014 and 2015 element of the assessment, it would be exempt, yet the working-class school down the road was far better, although the intake did not have the ability.

**Mr Gibb:** Yes, but the hon. Gentleman is referring to the position as it was. The metrics on which schools were being held to account for many years was the proportion of their pupils who achieved five or more good GCSEs. We have changed that. From 2016, the judgment will be based on progress 8—the level of progress made by the school. That will deal with all the issues to which the hon. Gentleman refers. We want to spread the measure over three years to ensure that one particular year does not lead to a school falling into the definition. What we cannot do when providing a legal definition of coasting is go back and have different metrics from those that the schools expected at that time. That is why we have combined an attainment

figure and a progress measure for the years 2014 and 2015. It is complex, but we believe that is the fairest way to hold schools to account.

We held a public consultation on our proposed coasting definition in autumn 2015, which sought views on the definition and on an illustrative version of the regulations. A range of views were expressed in the responses. Although there was some disagreement with the premise of identifying coasting schools, as the Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee recognised, there was wide support, including among those who were otherwise opposed to a definition, for the use of a progress measure as the basis of a coasting definition. Many respondents felt that that was the fairest and most effective way of identifying those schools that are failing to ensure that pupils reach their full potential.

I am aware that the Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee was concerned that the regulations would have a greater impact on schools than suggested in the accompanying explanatory memorandum. I reassure the Committee that that is not the case. Since the scrutiny Committee reported, we have published a statistical note with our provisional estimates of the number of schools that will meet the definition when revised 2016 results are published. That shows that about 800 schools—just under 5% of schools with eligible results—are likely to fall within the definition based on their provisional data. Some of those schools may also be below the floor standard or be judged inadequate by Ofsted. They would already be working with regional schools commissioners to improve their performance. For those schools, being identified as coasting will not necessarily lead to any additional action.

**Mike Kane (Wythenshawe and Sale East) (Lab):** The Minister identifies 800 schools falling within the category. Will he tell us how many of them are locally maintained schools? I have a figure of about 400, but he can come back to me later if needs be.

**Mr Gibb:** The hon. Gentleman asks a perfectly reasonable question and I will come back to him during the debate to give him those precise figures if they are available.

As I was saying, falling within the definition will be the start of a conversation. Regional school commissioners will talk to all the schools identified, whether they are academies or maintained schools—I respect the hon. Gentleman's point—to understand the wider context and decide whether additional support would help them to improve. The RSC may decide that a school is supporting pupils well or has a sufficient plan and the capacity to improve itself, and that therefore no further support is required. Alternatively, the RSC, working with the school, may consider that additional support is needed from, for example, a national leader of education or a high-performing local school. The RSC will then work with the school to help it to put that support in place.

In some cases, the regional schools commissioner, following discussions with the school, may think that a more formal approach is required. For maintained schools, the RSC may use the Secretary of State's power to require the school to accept support or to change the membership of its governing body. For academies, the RSC may issue the academy trust with a warning notice setting out the improvement action required.

[Mr Gibb]

We expect that the regional schools commissioners will use the Secretary of State's power to direct a coasting maintained school to become an academy, or to move a coasting academy to a new trust, in only a small minority of cases, which addresses head-on the point made by the hon. Member for Hyndburn.

**Graham Jones:** I accept that point. Will the Minister roll that argument on and tell me how a coasting free school will be affected?

**Mr Gibb:** The coasting definition in the regulations applies just as much to free schools and academies as it does to maintained schools. If having worked with the trust board of that free school there is a concern that it is unable to improve standards, there will be a re-brokerage of that school to another multi-academy trust with a stronger track record of school improvement and overseeing academies.

We do not believe that the regulations will place a significant or unreasonable burden on the schools system. All schools will already be working to ensure that they continue to improve and provide the best education they can for their pupils. Where more support is needed to help a coasting school to improve, we will ensure that that is put in place. Structural change through conversion to an academy or a change of academy trust will happen in only a small minority of cases and only where it is not possible to achieve the necessary improvement in any other way. Where that is the case, we will provide the new sponsors of the schools with additional funding to support the change. It is not unreasonable or overly burdensome when it is the only way to ensure that pupils receive the excellent education that they deserve.

I know that the Committee supports our ambition to ensure that all pupils, whatever their background, receive an education that enables them to fulfil their potential. I hope that, having seen the detail of our proposed coasting definition and heard about the principles that underpin it, the Committee will also agree that the definition set out in the regulations is the right one. I therefore commend the regulations to the Committee.

2.45 pm

**Mike Kane:** It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Gray. This is the final stage of the legislative journey to implement the Government's commitment to identifying coasting schools, but the idea of coasting schools came about under the last Labour Government, who saw them as schools at risk of failure. Labour identified the issue quite a few years ago, so it has been quite a journey to get to this point.

As the Minister has pointed out, the draft regulations give extended powers to the regional schools commissioners to intervene, yet today we learn that one of the Government's key performance indicators for the commissioners is not standards, but how many schools they get converted into academies. Just this afternoon, *Schools Week* says:

"The government continued judging regional schools commissioners (RSCs) on how many schools they converted into academies...despite fears about a conflict of interest".

That prompts the question whether the RSCs are independent arbiters in terms of judging whether our schools are failing, successful or coasting.

Although RSCs were introduced as a pragmatic response, we need to ensure that there is proper oversight. I think that there is a capacity issue. The Select Committee on Education says that RSCs are part of a "complicated system of...accountability and inspection".

That prompts the question whether they are fit for purpose. The Education Committee says that a "fundamental reassessment of accountability and oversight for all schools will be required in the future to provide coherence" and talks about ensuring "that RSCs have the capacity to cope with planned expansion of their role."

The Minister has already said that what we are discussing could affect 800 schools. We know from previous debates that the Department for Education is groaning under the weight of the MAT—multi-academy trust—initiative, whereby more schools are leaving local authority control and being directly controlled from Whitehall. That situation will be exacerbated very quickly, with 800 schools coming online.

The Select Committee says that the role of RSCs "remains unclear", that they do not have effective relationships and that there is a "lack of transparency" and an issue about decision making. It says that without attention to those issues, they will come across as "undemocratic and opaque".

One measure of the opacity is the report by Martin George in *The Times Educational Supplement* that none of the regional headteacher boards, which meet monthly to decide whether a school is coasting or doing well, "have published minutes since June".

So schools do not know; they are not getting the information. The Select Committee Chair, the hon. Member for Stroud (Neil Carmichael), told *The Times Educational Supplement*:

"There's a paucity of useful information available online about the work of headteacher boards...The Department for Education...and RSCs need to up their game and ensure up-to-date information is published to ensure there is transparency and accountability."

The ultimate tool in the regulations is that which forces schools to academise, but the Government need to think again about whether blanket academisation is the only vehicle to support the raising of standards. There is a mountain of evidence that academisation is no silver bullet, so let us look at the evidence. The Department's own statistical working paper says that at key stage 4, more than half—54%—of MATs are performing significantly below average for adding value, and a further 13% are estimated to be performing slightly below average.

**Michael Gove** (Surrey Heath) (Con): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mike Kane:** I would be honoured to give way to the former Secretary of State.

**Michael Gove:** Will the hon. Gentleman enlighten the Committee by reminding us how many more children are in schools that are good or outstanding now, in comparison with 2010?

**Mike Kane:** I remind the right hon. Gentleman of what Tim Brighouse said about the right hon. Gentleman's stewardship of the Department for Education, namely that

“there has to be coherence between what you say and what you do”.

There has been a decline in standards in our school system under this Government; there is no doubt about that. Currently, two thirds of multi-academy trust pupils are making less progress at key stage 4 than pupils nationally. If we look at other measures in the report, we will see that three in five schools—nearly 60%—are performing below average for improvement in the value added at key stage 4. That means three in five MATs are improving pupil progress at key stage 4 more slowly than schools with a similar starting point.

**Claire Perry (Devises) (Con):** I want to share with the hon. Gentleman my experience of being a governor of two schools in my constituency as they went through both the academisation and the MAT process. Perhaps rather than reading out what frankly sound like incorrect statistics, he should go and talk to schools. The turnaround in those schools and, indeed, the schools they have sponsored as part of the MAT initiative is astonishing, and it has been done at a time when we all could accept that the exam regime is getting tougher, not easier. I think he is factually incorrect.

**Mike Kane:** I am grateful for the hon. Lady's intervention, but with 20 years of governance experience, 10 years as a practising teacher and eight years on a local education authority, I am not going to take any lectures about our commitment to education.

At key stage 2, half of MATs are performing below average for adding value, and more than a third are below average for improvement in adding value. Those statistics need to be out there. The main finding is that on all value added measures, more MATs are performing at the extremes of significantly above or significantly below average than are performing close to the average. That is true for both key stage 2 and key stage 4. Performance levels vary widely among MATs.

**Chris Philp (Croydon South) (Con):** May I draw the shadow Minister's attention to the answer to the question raised by the former Secretary of State, my right hon. Friend the Member for Surrey Heath? Some 1.4 million more children are in good or outstanding schools now than before. Does the shadow Minister's analysis of multi-academy trusts and free schools account for a school's performance before it was academised? In my constituency—I suspect that this situation is similar to that in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Devises—the schools that were taken over and academised were failing schools that are now succeeding.

**Karl Turner (Kingston upon Hull East) (Lab):** Speech!

**The Chair:** I will decide whether or not it is a speech.

**Mike Kane:** What we have seen is an estate that has disintegrated and been nationalised and privatised in equal measure. As I have said, we have seen standards going down, which I will come back to in a moment.

In its executive summary, the Department mentions historically underperforming schools. The fact is that three quarters of schools in its analysis are sponsored academies, but the report finds a near to zero correlation between performance and either academy type or length of time open. That is true for key stage 2, key stage 4, value added and all improvement measures.

What data are being used to define “coasting”? Will they include 2016 primary school data, which are, in everybody's opinion, extraordinarily dodgy? That comes from the national schools commissioner, Sir David Carter, who said that those would not be used. So did Ofsted, but we are already hearing of schools having to use those data to define themselves as coasting. A primary school is coasting if it meets the 2016 part of the definition—in other words, if fewer than 85% of children achieve the expected standard at the end of primary and if the average progress made by pupils is minus 2.5 in English reading, minus 2.5 in mathematics or minus 3.5 in English writing.

However, in 2016, primary assessment reforms were undermined by errors and delays. Two papers—key stage 1 and key stage 2 spelling, punctuation and grammar tests—were leaked, which led to the key stage 1 paper being made optional and the Minister having to make a statement to the House about the leak of the key stage 2 paper. Guidance on teacher assessment for writing was not only issued unacceptably late; it was also subject to repeated correction, clarification and updates.

Pupils taking the 2016 assessments were doing so after two years of studying the new national curriculum, despite four years' worth of curriculum content being assessed. One can only imagine the immense workload and pressure that trying to cover so much in so little time generated for teachers and pupils. I visited primary school after primary school in Wythenshawe and Sale East to see the pressure that had been placed on those teachers because of the confusion and chaos that Government policies implemented at the heart of the curriculum and its assessment.

Ofsted warned its inspectors to use extreme caution when basing judgments on the 2016 data, especially the writing data. Only 53% of pupils met the expected standard, which is significantly below the attainment element of 85%. The brand new tests this year were rushed, chaotic and confusing, and there are major concerns with the assessment of writing and reading tests. We know from schools in our constituency that the pressure on heads has been appalling. How does all of that sit with the Secretary of State's commitment, on 19 October? She said:

“I want to be clear that no decisions on intervention will be made on the basis of the 2016 data alone.”—[*Official Report*, 19 October 2016; Vol. 615, c. 36WS.]

I have some questions for the Minister. I said earlier that 800 schools appear to be at risk of being declared as coasting. My data show that on 15 December nearly 400 local authority-maintained schools will be publicly labelled as coasting. Will the Minister confirm or deny that? Have the regional schools commissioners notified all of those schools, Ofsted and the local authorities involved? If the regional schools commissioners decide that the local authority should be involved, how will that be funded after the education services grant finishes in September 2017? If the regional schools commissioners decide that intervention is required, are they sufficiently

[Mike Kane]

equipped and funded to carry out or commission the school improvement role, and are there sufficient multi-academy trusts waiting to take over, particularly for those small primary schools? I know that that is a huge concern, particularly for rural schools in the constituencies of many Conservative Members.

I have asked the Minister a series of questions, and we are extraordinarily concerned about what happened with the 2016 assessments and how that will impact on the regulations. We also have concerns about the lack of devolved regional schools commissioners, who are accountable only to the Secretary of State and whose independence is being tainted by the fact that one of their key performance indicators is how many academies they create on their watch.

2.58 pm

**Robert Ffello** (Stoke-on-Trent South) (Lab): It is a pleasure, as ever, to see you in the Chair, Mr Gray. I will make just a couple of points, if I may. First, I certainly do not think it is a political point to say that every child should fulfil their potential, and I therefore do not think that anybody wants to see a school that coasts or deliberately allows its pupils not to fulfil their potential. Sadly, what is a political point is the means by which that potential is achieved. We have heard numbers bandied about on more children being in good schools and all the rest of that, but I pay tribute to the teachers and senior leadership teams who, despite everything, are performing phenomenally under huge pressure, and who are helping our children to be the best that they can be.

This instrument will not win any prizes for plain English. A slight bugbear of mine is when measures have quotes such as “PTREADWRITTAMATX’ column” and so forth. It takes me back 30-odd years to when I was messing around with my first computer and looking at coding. My fear is that the measure is some sort of code, and that the result is automatic academisation. I will come to that point shortly.

The explanatory memorandum states:

“Once a school has fallen within the coasting definition, Regional Schools Commissioners (RSCs) acting on behalf of the Secretary of State will engage the schools to consider its wider context, and decide whether additional support is needed”.

It is a shame that it takes a mathematical calculation to require the regional schools commissioners to do something. I am sure that better regional schools commissioners are already all over their schools, but the way the measure is structured suggests that there is no engagement, which I am sure there is. Not only would a non-professional non-teacher think that the instrument is gibberish, they would also be slightly if not very concerned that the engagement of commissioners happens only when a mathematical problem arises and when various points are triggered from something that is, at first sight, unintelligible.

Another concern is the time delay—the measure talks about looking at things over three years. It may well be that a school has not been performing particularly well for a year and starts to trigger the tests. By the end of the three years of tests, we are potentially into the fifth year of that school not performing well, by which time

pupils will have passed all the way through that school without it ever being identified as coasting. I would like a situation whereby, if a primary school has problems—[*Interruption*]. Bless my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn. If a primary school has been identified, can support therefore be offered to the secondary schools that those children are going to, to ensure that they do not suffer in their education?

I wanted to share my concern about paragraph 7.9 in the explanatory memorandum, which states:

“Intervention will not be automatic.”

The Minister repeated this point. It is a shame that there is not already support, but if support is not automatic, it seems to contradict the requirements that the commissioners try to get more schools to be academies. I am therefore concerned not only that that intervention will be automatic, but that the automatic default position will be for the school to be made into an academy.

You will be delighted to hear, Mr Gray, that I will not detain the Committee any more than I already have, but I would like the Minister to address my points and concerns. I beg him please in future to have statutory instruments that do not use such awful phrases, albeit in inverted commas.

3.3 pm

**Mr Gibb:** The hon. Member for Wythenshawe and Sale East, the shadow Minister, asked about the RSCs’ KPIs. We are reviewing the RSCs’ KPIs to ensure that they do continue to reflect the RSCs’ new role and remit appropriately. The revised set of year 2 KPIs will be published in the academy’s annual report later this year. The year 3 KPIs are being developed as we speak.

**Mike Kane:** Is the Minister therefore saying that it is inappropriate that a regional schools commissioner should have a KPI that is judged on how many schools they make into academies in an academic year?

**Mr Gibb:** No, what I am saying is that the KPIs are evolving in the same way as the role of the regional schools commissioner is evolving. As that role evolves, and as new responsibilities are given to the regional schools commissioner, so the KPIs have to be revised and amended to reflect those new responsibilities.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the split between academies and maintained schools. As far as primary schools are concerned, he is right. On the basis of the provisional data for 2016 and the previous two years, about 373 local authority primary schools will fall within the definition, along with 106 academies. In terms of secondary schools, 151 local authority maintained schools and 176 academy schools fall within the definition.

**Graham Jones:** I am grateful for the Minister’s generosity in giving way and tackling some of these questions. Is this a quota for the number of academy schools? We see figures such as 400 out of 800 schools, or the figures that the Minister has just given. Are they quotas that ought to be achieved by those making the decisions about how many academy schools there should be?

**Mr Gibb:** No, there is no quota. Coasting is not about academisation, as I have tried to say a number of times. The measure is about ensuring that schools get

the support they need to improve, so that the pupils at those schools get the education they deserve in order to fulfil their potential. That is what this is about in toto. I hope the hon. Gentleman accepts that.

The split between academies and maintained schools at secondary level reflects the fact that more than 60% of all secondary schools are now academies. The sponsored academies have a history of poor performance, which is why they became sponsored academies. I am not surprised by the split of the numbers of academies and the numbers of maintained local authority schools at key stage 4 at secondary level that would fall within the definition.

The hon. Member for Wythenshawe and Sale East asked whether we will name those schools that fall under the definition. Coasting is not about naming and shaming, and we will not publish a list of schools that fall under the definition. It is about support. The first coasting schools will be identified after the final 2016 results are published. We will not make that contact on the basis of the provisional results because they change.

**Mike Kane:** Will parents know whether their child is in a coasting school or not?

**Mr Gibb:** I will come back to that point in a moment. All of the definition of a coasting school is based on published data. If parents want to go through the definition, they will be able to identify that. In addition, once a school has been notified that it falls within the coasting definition, it will inform parents of that fact.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether the regional schools commissioners have the capacity to take on that role with coasting schools. Alongside this restructuring, the number of staff delivering the regional schools commissioner remit has grown to reflect the growing number of academies and free schools, and the expanded scope of the regional schools commissioner remit, including responsibilities for coasting schools. Because of those new responsibilities, there are approximately 350 full-time equivalent staff members across the eight regional schools commissioner-led regional teams. As their responsibilities change, there will be changes to staff numbers.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether the regional schools commissioners have the expertise to decide what action to take in a coasting school. Regional schools commissioners have a wealth of experience to draw on when making decisions. They have been appointed by the Secretary of State for their extensive knowledge of the education sector in their regions. They are supported by headteacher boards made up of local outstanding headteachers, chief executives of multi-academy trusts and local leaders.

The hon. Gentleman raised the same question that Opposition Members raised about the academies programme. Sponsored academies are improving faster than their predecessor schools, but my right hon. Friend the Member for Surrey Heath, the former Secretary of State, asked the key question in the debate: how many more children are in schools judged good and outstanding today compared with when Labour left office in 2010? He asked the hon. Gentleman that question and answer was there none. We were helpfully aided by my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon South, who provided the answer when he said that 1.4 million more pupils are in schools graded good or outstanding today than in 2010. I have an announcement to make, and I hope the

Committee is paying attention. There are now 1.8 million more pupils in schools graded good or outstanding today than in 2010, and nearly 90% of schools are judged by Ofsted to be good or outstanding.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether there were enough sponsors. Over the past five years, we have delivered 1,726 sponsored academies and have 957 approved academy sponsors. Over the next five years, as the number of sponsored academies continues to grow, regional schools commissioners will continue to work with existing sponsors to help them expand. In addition to growing existing sponsors, there is a pool of high-performing schools that we can draw on. To reiterate the point that I have made several times during the debate, the coasting measure focuses on support. We expect regional schools commissioners to pursue an academy solution only in a small minority of cases.

The hon. Gentleman raised the issue of funding and the education services grant. In 2016-17, the Department has provided more than £50 million to fund accredited system leaders. As of 1 November, there are more than 750 teaching schools, 1,150 national leaders of education and 500 national leaders of governance, present in every region in England. New designation criteria for NLEs and teaching schools will increase that further still. We are also considering what new funding might be made available to schools to support improvement, including for coasting schools. We expect to make an announcement on that shortly.

**Mike Kane:** This might be an opportunity for the Minister. The fair funding formula was delayed for months and months. When will the consultation be announced?

**The Chair:** In the context of this debate, Minister.

**Mr Gibb:** Within the context of this debate, it is obviously key that schools are properly funded. We have ensured that core school funding has been a priority. We also want to ensure that there is fair funding and we will be making an announcement shortly on the second stage of that consultation. We consulted on the principles behind the national fair funding formula. We are absolutely determined to ensure that the historical anomalies and unfairness of the current funding system are addressed, which is something that was not delivered by the last Labour Government.

**Graham Jones:** Coasting schools—or even failing schools, because they are not coasting—could be an issue in my constituency because of falling school rolls for example. That would deplete school funding and resources and make the school unable to provide the quality of education that would be expected at a school with a full roll. Will the Minister take such considerations into account when discussing the funding formula and coasting schools? My constituency has a declining population, for example, and that clearly has an impact on the school roll, school budgets and, therefore, school performance.

**Mr Gibb:** The hon. Gentleman will notice from the first stage of the consultation all the different factors that will lead to determining the fair funding formula.

[Mr Gibb]

They include things such as low prior attainment of pupils and sparsity. There will be a fixed sum for every school to enable small schools to cope with fixed costs. All the issues that the hon. Gentleman raises are reflected in the principles established in the first stage of the consultation. The decisions that we are making now are on the weighting of those factors, which we will announce and consult on very shortly.

I want to refer to the issues raised by the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent South. He is right and we accept all the criticism that he makes. The regulations are complex. That is because from a legal point of view they have to pinpoint precisely and unambiguously which elements of the performance data the coasting definition relates to. The only way to do that is to refer to the unique column names in the data files that underpin the performance tables each year. We recognise that that does not make the regulations particularly user-friendly, but it was necessary to draft them in that manner to ensure that they were legally effective.

Schools will not have to rely on the regulations to understand the coasting definition; the requirements are also set out clearly and in plain English in the wider technical guidance on accountability for primary and secondary schools. Schools also understand where those numbers come from for their own school and nationally. On that basis, I hope that the Committee will support the regulations.

**The Chair:** The Question is that the Committee has considered the draft Coasting Schools (England) Regulations 2016. As many of that opinion, say aye. [HON. MEMBERS: "Aye."]. To the contrary, no. I think the ayes have it. The ayes have it. Order, order.

**Karl Turner:** No.

**The Chair:** Too late, mate. Sorry. [Interruption.] Order. Am I right in thinking that Opposition Members are changing their minds?

**Karl Turner:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Let's just do the thing again, for the sake of good order. I do not want any complaints.

*Question put.*

*The Committee divided: Ayes 10, Noes 6.*

**Division No. 1]**

**AYES**

Argar, Edward  
Bingham, Andrew  
Evennett, rh David  
Gibb, Mr Nick  
Gove, rh Michael

Grant, Mrs Helen  
Perry, Claire  
Philp, Chris  
Warman, Matt  
White, Chris

**NOES**

Flello, Robert  
Hayes, Helen  
Jones, Graham

Kane, Mike  
Leslie, Chris  
Turner, Karl

*Question accordingly agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That the Committee has considered the draft Coasting Schools (England) Regulations 2016.

3.15 pm

*Committee rose.*