

**Michael Gove, UK Education Secretary, speaks about improving the quality of teaching,  
London, 5 September 2013**

Ladies and gentlemen,

Above my desk at home there's a simple slogan - 'If you can read this, thank a teacher'. And I do thank my teachers. Every day. I give thanks for the wonderful opportunities I've been given by them. But today, I also want to give thanks for the amazing work being done by the teachers who are starting the new school year this week.

I am fortunate as Education Secretary because we currently have the best generation of teachers ever in our classrooms - including the very best generation ever of young teachers - those who have entered our classrooms over the last few years. This government is determined to do all it can to support the teaching profession because teachers hold in their hands the success of our country and the wellbeing of its citizens; they are the key to helping every child in this country to realise their full potential. Teachers are the guardians of the intellectual life of the nation.

Sadly, however, in too many ways and by too many people the importance of teaching is being denied. There are 3 principal attacks on the work teachers do, which I want to look into today: 1) The first attack holds that teaching is a depressing and demotivating activity - and that the profession is suffering a decline in reputation. 2) The second attack is a denial that teaching can make any real difference. 3) And the third attack comes from those who believe teachers can't be trusted - that they need outsiders to monitor, police and approve their activities.

Let me start from the first attack. Teaching is currently being described as a profession 'in crisis'. Teachers are said to be 'angry, frustrated and demoralised'. The truth, however, is very different: Contrary to most reports, teaching in Britain has never been in better health. The qualifications of newly recruited teachers are phenomenally high, the pay isn't bad, the profession's status is rising, schools have never been better equipped and teachers' pensions remain generous compared with those of other professional categories. Students have never been more motivated and parents rarely so supportive. The fact is that teaching, for all its frustrations, is a more respected and attractive profession than it has been for many years. It really is the 'noblest of professions'.