

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

Ladies and gentlemen,

as Education Secretary I am here today to reiterate the government's determination to do all it can to support the teaching profession. We firmly believe that teachers hold in their hands the success of our country and the wellbeing of its citizens.

Sadly, however, in too many ways and by too many people the importance of teaching is being denied. One of the principal attacks on the work teachers do is the denial that teaching can make any real difference to the life chances of children. The argument goes that the socio-economic background of children determines their fate far more than the level of academic expectations at school or the quality of teaching. And yet, we have plentiful examples of state schools where children from the poorest, most deprived backgrounds achieve just the same impressively high marks as their richer, luckier peers. Why do these schools succeed in transforming poor children's lives for good? Because they focus on the quality of teaching.

All over the world, research has shown that great teaching can and does make a huge difference to children's performance. Great teaching involves empathy and energy, authority, detailed planning, and constant self-improvement. A great teacher has the ability to 'read' a classroom and understand its dynamics, instantly; a great teacher shows inspirational leadership, and knows how to excite and motivate pupils to help them achieve their full potential. But common to all the great teachers I know is a love of children and a love of knowledge. Let me dwell a moment on this notion of knowledge. In 'Seven Myths about Education', **Daisy Christodoulou** points out that learning depends on teachers passing on key 'building blocks' of knowledge to students so that they become lodged firmly in their memory. Although the work may initially be hard, boring and repetitive it brings its own special rewards. Only after learning how letters on the page correspond to sounds and words can children discover the magic and mystery of English literature. Research in cognitive science has provided evidence that a traditional knowledge-based curriculum is the key to educational success. Pupils with a rich base of factual knowledge find it easier to learn more, as factual knowledge enhances cognitive processes like problem solving and reasoning. In other words, the more knowledge students accumulate, the smarter they become.