

...ve had time to do the reform." Today we accept free primary and secondary education as a national birthright. But pre-war, things were very different. Most pupils left school at 14. Butler's act introduced compulsory education to 15, with a clause to raise it to 16; any fee-paying at state schools was forbidden; and church schools were brought into the national system. The 1944 Education Act provided the chances of social mobility, some educationalists ever since have tried to build on.

But passing the 11-plus didn't necessarily guarantee working-class pupils would take up their place at grammar school. Shirley Williams, who was our education secretary between 1974 and 1979, says: "I had several pupils whose parents couldn't afford grammar school at all. Others didn't go because they were expected to stay at least 15 and their parents wanted

...ever been attempted by a responsible government'

Winston Churchill

Butler's legacy remained relatively unscathed until Kenneth Baker's 1988 Education Reform Act, which dismantled much of what he had created, with directives from Whitehall about curriculum and testing, the birth of GCSEs and the advent of local management of schools, which challenged the historic role of local authorities. Now headteachers and governors had control of their budgets, and teachers naturally became nervous of pay and conditions being worked out by individual schools rather than through national agreements.

But if Baker was controlling, Blair and Blunkett were even more centrist and interventionist when they delivered

...mania in 1997, where the Butler act was localist, New Labour actively challenged schools' autonomy through targets, strategies and league tables, which overwhelmed the profession. Relations with the teaching unions hit a nadir, with ballots and strikes in the late 1990s. Blunkett is unapologetic. "If you're going to bring about change, you're going to break eggs, and the grump in the staffroom was always going to have one foot in the grave," he says.

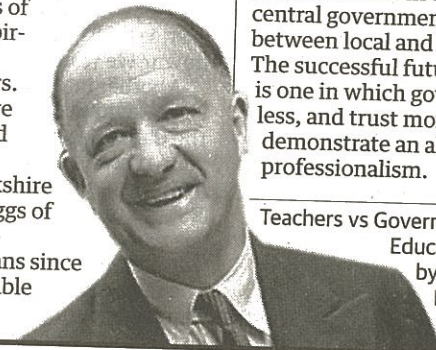
Today, Gove seems just as happy to incur the wrath of teachers. Sir David Bell, permanent secretary at the Department for Education under both Labour and coalition governments, tells the programme: "There was clearly a quite significant attempt by the coalition government to reset the relationship with the trade unions."

Despite all the criticisms of academies, free schools and excessive testing of pupils, schools are unquestionably better places to be than in 1944. There is now investment in state education which

...dreamed about. And while social mobility challenges persist, university participation has risen in a way the reformers in 1944 could not have imagined.

What will the education system look like in 70 years' time? Blunkett, who has been reviewing education policy for Labour, is clear about his party's next steps. "I think the changes are irreversible," he says, "although we'll want to build on them and we'll want to reintroduce the glue." So he is rejecting the idea of thousands of schools working alone, preferring a rejuvenation in counties or regions of ambitious and inspiring political and headteacher leaders. "Academies are here to stay, but we need something like the Cleggs of West Yorkshire rather than the Cleggs of the modern era."

National politicians since 1944 have been unable



Teachers vs Government: 70 Years of Education Policy, presented by Roy Blatchford, is on Radio 4, 8pm, 22 April

...to resist tinkering with and sometimes meddling in the nation's classrooms. Greater autonomy has often felt as if it has come with conditions attached: you are free to run your own schools as long as you do it the way we want you to. At times, teachers have responded naively and crudely - Gove is certainly not the first education secretary to bring them out of the classroom on to the street in protest.

The story since 1944 has been one of conflict and consensus, with varying degrees of intensity. What is needed is mutual trust in education: between central government and teachers, and between local and national politicians. The successful future of our schools is one in which governments meddle less, and trust more. And teachers demonstrate an altogether new professionalism.

Multiple choice

How can Ofsted win over disgruntled teachers?

It is "no longer just disliked, but hated", according to last week's conferences. What changes does the inspection body introduce to restore confidence among the teaching profession?

Robin Bevan, headteacher, Southend high school for boys, Southend-on-Sea
One thing that they could do quickly is adopt a jury-style group of classroom teacher school leaders to join inspection on a random basis. willingness to invite teachers

and staff to inspections would show transparency. The problem we have at the moment is there are so many myths about what Ofsted does, and so many allegations - right or wrong - about them not being competent. In a system that's as high-stakes as Ofsted, teachers need to have confidence in those visiting schools.



Helen Cook, maths teacher in Berkshire

As a maths teacher, I would like to know that the person who watches me is - or has very recently been - a teacher in a maths class of a similar age group.

I don't see how a primary school teacher could assess a secondary lesson any more than I, as a secondary school teacher, would ever consider myself capable of teaching a primary class - it's not something I'm trained for. It would

also be nice to have some constructive feedback. At the moment teachers feel Ofsted is just there to tear us apart, rather than to offer support.

If they want to come and watch, it would be nice to talk to them afterwards and say: "You didn't like that, why? You thought that was good - why?" Otherwise, it's a waste of time, and it's very undermining - which it's not meant to be.



Ross Morrison McGill, assistant vice-principal at Greig City academy, Haringey, London

Allow inspectors to visit classrooms, but do not record a graded evaluation for teaching.

Ofsted holds such a major - perhaps damaging - influence on educational orthodoxy and any sound regime would be one that improved the qual-

ity of education, and did not have teachers second-guessing pedagogical preferences.

Hold all schools to account, but consider different types of inspections such as school evaluations, and allow the data to speak for itself.



Abbie Saxby, teacher at Castledown primary school, Hastings

Ofsted could reduce the pressure on school leaders to have data tracking students. A lot of the data I have to produce doesn't necessarily help my teaching, it's just there so that I have a paper trail of evidence ready for when Ofsted comes.

If you're a teacher, you accept that paperwork is part of the job, but it is pretty extreme at times; and if you're a newly-qualified teacher with tons to do, it's an extra pressure.



Geoff Barton, headteacher at King Edward VI school, Suffolk

I think Ofsted needs to decide what it is actually for. It's as if Michael Wilshaw has felt that he is still the headteacher in his own school, pontificating in his own staffroom. It's given an impression that Ofsted can comment on everything, rather than knowing what its core business is. For schools that are under pressure, it gives a sense that Ofsted is more important than it really is.

Most parents keep Ofsted in proportion - they will read the reports but they also listen to local opinion. But, as a school leader, if you're constantly seeing comments about what the head of Ofsted thinks about all sorts of issues, you perhaps think that they carry more clout than they actually do.

Interviews by Rebecca Ratcliffe