

Pre-panel speaking note

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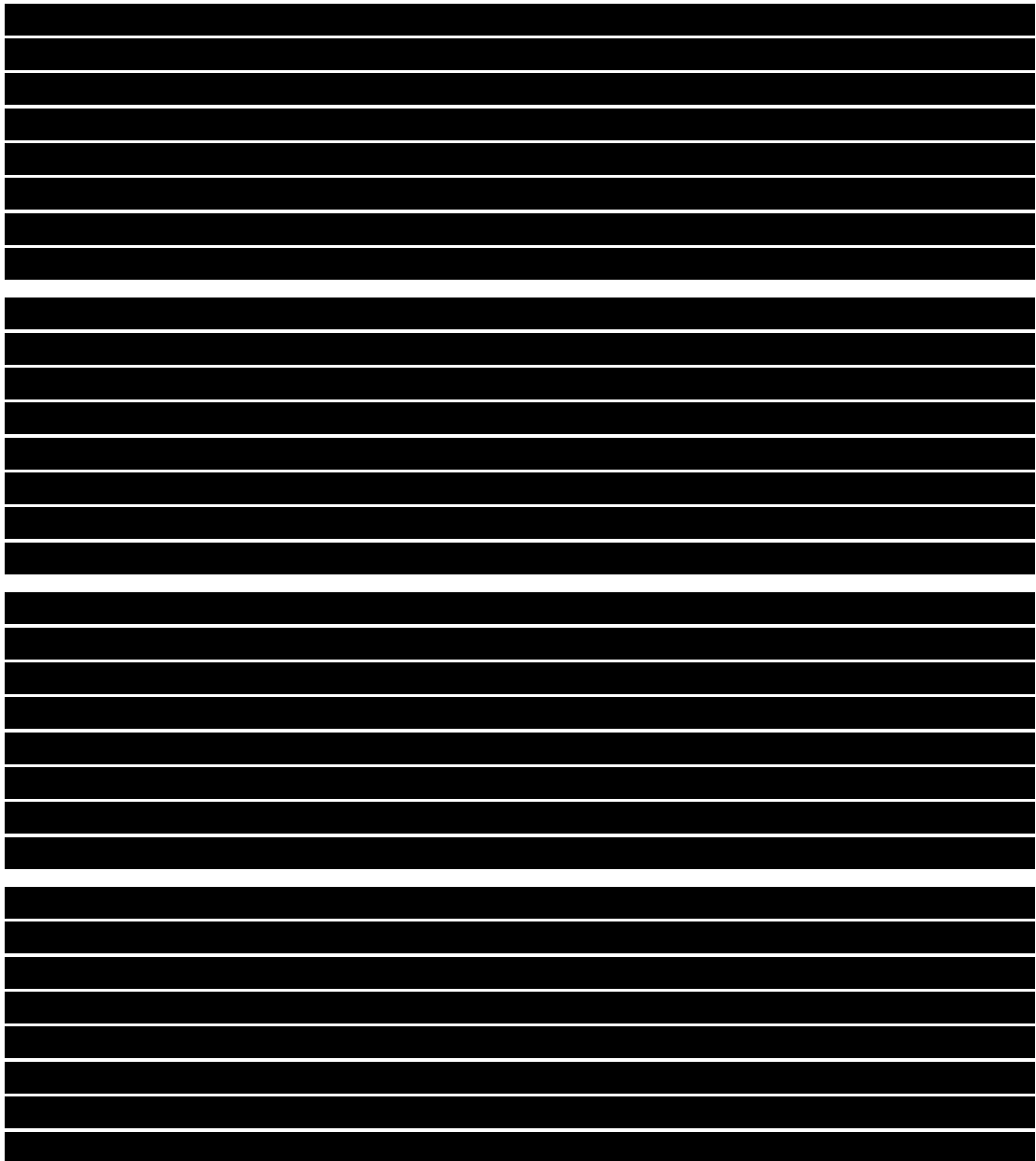
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[Capital funding for schools \(nao.org.uk\)](https://nao.org.uk) [Capital funding for schools \(nao.org.uk\)](https://nao.org.uk)

We concluded DfE had made available a large number of school places, but faced challenges in that the demand for schools places would move to secondary schools which more complex and costly. DfE had been making better use of data, but need to do more to ensure make best use of capital funding available to repair estate and create places. In particular:

- DfE and LAs created lots of school places, mostly in good/ outstanding schools to meet demand. Hard to find places in short timeframes though.
- Regional variation with pressures in some places and not others¹

¹ (Nationally in 2015, 10% of primary places and 16% of secondary places were unfilled. However, this spare capacity does not mean that all areas have enough places. More than one in 10 planning areas had fewer than 2% of their places unfilled, the level that the Department funds to allow operational flexibility.

- DfE improves how it estimates the need for places, picking up local hotspots
- LAs have a statutory duty to provide enough school places in their areas but they do not control the number of places in academies or free schools. *Will free schools be financially viable if they do not have enough pupil numbers?*
- There were challenges identifying suitable sites for Free Schools, which has meant complex commercial arrangements and high costs.

PAC report on Capital Funding for schools

<i>The Department should demonstrate to us how it will work effectively with local authorities to understand local demand for school places.</i>	Between 2010 and 2015, the Department for Education (the Department) and local authorities created 600,000 new school places at a cost of £7.5 billion The Department could not explain to us how it would judge whether an area has too many places or its plan to make sure that places are being created in the right areas	Do you have a clear understanding on demand in LAs and how this may change?
<i>Free schools – and need to be clear if aim of these to deliver choice, meet demand or improve standards</i>		
<i>Need to look at the requirements for LocatEd and whether fulfilled and also whether homeowners contributing to the funding required</i>	On average, the Department has paid nearly 20% more for land for free schools than official valuations. To help manage these land purchases more effectively the Department has set up a company called LocatED. It expects the company will be able to attract staff with specialist property expertise by paying them at a higher rate than civil service rates	
fill gaps in its knowledge about the school estate. Specifically it needs to understand the prevalence, condition and management of asbestos		

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