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## Schools to have three-year budget

**Tony Blair has promised head teachers more control over school funding with a new three-year budget.**

The prime minister told the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) union's conference in Cardiff that the move would be announced in July.

He also indicated a promise to offer a free nursery school place to every two-year-old is likely to be a centre-piece of Labour's election manifesto.

Mr Blair said he wanted to create a "universal service" for under-fives.

He detailed government plans to provide nursery places for two year-olds in the poorest areas of England.

New children's centres attached to schools would offer child care, healthcare and employment advice for mothers seeking a return to work.

Starting education at the age of five "no longer meets the future needs of Britain", Mr Blair added.

"Pre-school education has a powerful impact on children's development.

"Even at 22 months there is a significant divergence in development between children of different social backgrounds, and it steadily increases thereafter.

"Children achieve more if they get the best of early starts."

Mr Blair told the conference the change from a yearly budget would give schools greater financial stability and autonomy.

He said the budget would also be aligned to the school year, making it easier to plan spending.



Tony Blair plans to align the budget to the school year

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Prime minister Tony Blair