

stand up for education

Three children are shown in silhouette, jumping joyfully against a background of large, overlapping triangles in blue, red, and purple. One child is on the left, jumping with arms outstretched. Another is on the right, jumping with arms outstretched. A third child is in the upper right, jumping with arms outstretched.

A manifesto for
our children's
education



National Union
of Teachers



A manifesto for our children's education

www.teachers.org.uk/manifesto

Politicians should listen to parents and teachers

The general election in 2015 will be a watershed moment for education in England and Wales.

Parents and teachers have a golden opportunity to use the time before the general election to pressure politicians.

The NUT believes that every child and young person should be valued – that's why we argue for action to tackle child poverty and to create a flexible and inclusive curriculum that's accessible to every learner.

We believe the role of teachers should be valued – that's why we argue for teachers with the right qualifications in every classroom.

We believe the vital links between parents, schools and communities should be valued – that's why we argue that local authorities should be responsible for schools, not a remote Secretary of State.

The education policies set by the Westminster Government have a major impact on what happens in classrooms. Current policies are taking the education system in the wrong direction.

Our manifesto makes recommendations for priorities and policies to benefit all children. We are asking that the next government adopts them. Please show this manifesto to friends, colleagues and neighbours.



CHRISTINE BLOWER
General Secretary

For suggestions on using this manifesto and to order copies go to page 15.

We need a wider vision of learning and achievement

Our schools and colleges should enable every child to achieve, to stay safe, to be healthy and to make a positive contribution.

However, options for children and young people have been narrowed. Music, arts, drama and vocational qualifications have been sidelined.

Funding cuts are narrowing students' options post-16.

GCSEs and A-levels have been limited to single end of course exams, which limits the skills that can be assessed and disadvantages many learners.

In primary schools, SATs and the phonics test are narrowing the curriculum. Our world class early years education is also under threat.

Our recommendations:

- All students should be entitled to benefit from a broad, balanced and enriching curriculum
- A new national council for curriculum and assessment should be established to bring together teachers, employers and parents to develop an exciting vision for education
- A coherent 14-19 qualifications framework is needed, which unifies all learning routes, both academic and vocational.

We need more time for teaching – not more tests

Our schools need to be accountable, but the current system stifles creativity, leads to ‘teaching to the test’ and does not promote sustainable improvements in education.

Our children are amongst the most tested in the world, with children as young as five years old labelled failures.

The £156 million a year spent on Ofsted inspections could be better invested in services to generate improvement, share good practice and remove barriers to pupils’ learning.

We need to recover the time teachers once had for giving useful information to parents. Data can be useful but the current over-emphasis on data collection gets in the way of teaching, pastoral support and individual attention for students.

Our recommendations:

- There should be a new approach to evaluating schools that involves teachers, parents and local communities
- Local authorities should inspect schools to ensure that school self-evaluation is accurate and valid
- League tables should be replaced by national sampling
- We should nurture a climate of professional respect and responsibility as was the case with the London Challenge, which made London schools among the best in the world.

All children deserve qualified teachers

Academies and free schools in England are allowed to employ unqualified staff to teach. In free schools, people teaching without qualified teacher status represent 13% of 1,500 full-time teachers.

Children need to be taught by qualified teachers because they are the experts in how children learn and develop.

Children with special educational needs, children in nursery classes, teenagers taught in alternative provision, all need qualified teachers.

Clearly, every child and young person should have the right to be taught by a qualified teacher.

Our recommendations:

- All those teaching should be qualified teachers or on a training route towards qualification
- Every teacher should receive regular training throughout their career
- There should be ring-fenced funding in school and college budgets, fully funded by the Government, for teacher and staff training
- The Government should develop a strategy for teacher recruitment that reflects the diverse nature of school communities.

89% of parents said they would like it to be a manifesto commitment for political parties that all teachers in state funded schools should have, or be working towards, a teaching qualification.

YouGov survey, April 2014.

We need to end child poverty

In the UK 3.5 million children are growing up in poverty. Huge cuts to local authority funding have impacted disproportionately on the poorest, most disadvantaged communities.

More and more families are relying on food banks. Some children have had to leave their communities and schools due to the bedroom tax. Financial support for staying in education post-16 has been slashed.

Whether children are ready and able to learn depends on a wide range of factors, many of which are outside teachers' control. Unless child poverty is addressed by the next government, millions will never achieve their full potential.

Lessons from other countries such as Finland show that, when governments pursue policies to reduce inequality, educational outcomes radically improve.

Our recommendations:

- Stringent targets for the Government to end child poverty by 2020
- The bedroom tax should be abolished
- Increase funding for high quality early years education, with more qualified teachers and smaller nursery classes
- Government should make reducing youth unemployment a high priority
- Restore financial support for post-16 students to stay in education.

85% of teachers have seen an increase in the number of children coming to school hungry in the last two years.

NUT/Child Poverty Action Group, October 2013

In April 2014 YouGov surveyed parents and teachers about the UK education system. It asked them about the UK education system, government policy and teachers' confidence. The results are in our new report, *A manifesto for education*.

The key findings were:



90% thought a **love of learning** and **gaining skills** for adult life **matter as much** as attaining **high grades**

82% believed that **publicly funded schools** should only employ **qualified teachers**

81% believed that **local authorities** should have the **power to open new schools**



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86% rejected
the idea of state schools
being run for profit

77% believed there
should be a
national pay
system for
all teachers

Only **3%** “**totally trusted**”
the Education Secretary to
make decisions about their
child's education



We need to end the school places crisis

Parents in some areas are facing a huge shortage of pupil places, particularly in primary schools.

Since 2010, the Government has restricted local authorities' legal powers to plan and deliver new school places. They cannot open new schools or direct academies or free schools to expand.

Many councils are driven to put mobile classrooms on school playgrounds to cope.

In the meantime, free schools are being opened in areas that already have surplus places. Many free schools are opening without space for children to play.

Our recommendations:

- Give local authorities back the legal powers they need to plan and provide enough school places in their local areas
- The Government should provide sufficient funding to enable them to do so
- Restore the role of the local authority as the democratic local organisation responsible for education.

By giving power to create schools back to councils, government could ensure places for children from the ages of four to 18 can be delivered according to local demand, and in line with the local needs of mums and dads and their children.

*Conservative Chair of the Local Government Association's
Children and Young People board, March 2014*

We need to mend a fractured education system

The academies and free schools programme has resulted in unnecessary fragmentation of the education system.

Academies and free schools are based on the idea that a free market produces the best results. This approach is already causing many problems.

All our schools need to respect and meet the needs of our diverse communities.

But academies and free schools are answerable to the Education Secretary, not to local councils or communities.

They are being run by unelected, unaccountable individuals or organisations, using huge amounts of taxpayers' money.

Some free schools have faced serious problems including fraud, mismanagement and poor education provision.

Our recommendations:

- End approvals for free schools and give all schools the right to return to the status of local community schools
- Stop the forced academies programme immediately
- Return oversight of all state funded schools to local authorities – whilst maintaining appropriate levels of autonomy on curriculum and assessment
- Each local council should have a Director for Education to ensure consistency and equality and a good local school for every child.

Education should not be run for profit

Education is a public service and a public good. It must be inclusive and accessible, with all schools working together in the interests of all children and young people.

The Government is opening up a market for companies to run education services for profit. In Sweden, profit-making schools have been a disaster and outcomes for children have plummeted.

Private employment agencies take millions away from schools while cutting supply teachers' pay.

Every penny spent outsourcing a service or turning a school into an academy takes funding away from schools and children.

Our recommendations:

- Any future government must rule out the idea that schools could be run for profit
- A halt to all further privatisation or outsourcing of education services and schools
- An end to the marketisation of education and all policies that inhibit cooperation between schools
- Restore funding for high quality local authority services for schools and families.

Between May 2010 and December 2013, the DfE paid £76.7 million to 14 private companies providing legal, accountancy, management consultancy and property service support for the academies and free schools schemes.

TUC 'Education not for sale' report, March 2014

We need to invest in education

Under this Government, public spending on education has been slashed by over £5 billion in real terms, with more cuts to come, reversing previous increases in education spending.

Schools have had to use Pupil Premium money to cope with these real terms funding cuts.

Sixth form colleges have been hit even harder. They have lost nearly £100 million a year, resulting in cuts to courses and staff. Meanwhile, £45 million is being spent on one free school sixth form in London.

The cuts to education spending have hit other areas hard: support for pupils with special educational needs, early years provision and key local authority services for schools have been cut.

Funding has been slashed for education building projects, stopping modernisation work and affecting asbestos removal.

Our recommendations:

- The Government should commit to reversing the downward spiral of education funding, restoring it to at least 2010 levels in real terms
- It should commit to an expanded programme of school building improvements including asbestos removal
- The post-16 funding crisis should be tackled – starting by making sixth form colleges exempt from VAT, like schools and academies.

We need teaching to be an attractive profession

According to the Government's own figures many teachers are working 60 hours a week.

Much of this workload is the result of unnecessary bureaucracy and accountability measures that do nothing to help children learn.

Teachers want to spend their time creating exciting lessons and memorable learning for children, not form-filling and poring over spreadsheets.

Thousands of good teachers are leaving the profession.

Not enough teachers are being recruited, and the Government's pay and pensions policy is making recruitment and retention more difficult. This will result in a teacher shortage, which is clearly bad for education.

Our recommendations:

- The Government should take action to reduce workload, in particular by cutting bureaucracy and ending excessive accountability measures
- It should restore a national pay structure for schools and academies – and professional pay levels for all teachers
- It should recognise that it is not in the interests of children for teachers to have to work until they are 68
- Supply teachers should be given access to the same pay and pensions as other teachers.

There is clear and consistent evidence that both the starting, and profession wide, pay of teachers is less competitive relative to other professional occupations ... this gap is widening.

School Teachers' Review Body report, June 2014

Use this manifesto...

Parents and teachers, working together, can make this manifesto a reality.

1. Talk with friends, colleagues and neighbours about our vision for the future of children's education, and distribute the manifesto to homes near you.
2. Help out on a Stand Up for Education stall where this manifesto can be discussed with members of the public.
3. Hold an after-work event to discuss this manifesto and the issues local parents would like to raise with election candidates.
4. Together with other parents and teachers, meet or write to parliamentary candidates to ask their position on this manifesto. Then tell other parents and teachers what they have said.

For more information about the policies, ideas and evidence in this manifesto, go to www.teachers.org.uk/manifesto

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