

RECLAIMING EDUCATION

In its 2017 General Election Manifesto, The Labour Party promised to create a National Education Service (NES). The Reclaiming Education alliance strongly supported this and now offers the following suggestions as to how it can be made a reality.

AN EDUCATION PROGRAMME FOR LABOUR

Initial priorities

1. We will lay the foundations for a stable and sustainable education system that serves the many and not just the few. Our initial priorities will be driven by our commitment to equality and a sense of urgency. Our programme will tackle waste, inefficiency and corruption and put in place a secure funding system that adequately meets the needs of all phases of education and training.
2. We will immediately halt the academies and free schools programme and return the responsibility for meeting the need for school places to local authorities. We will remove the clauses in the Education Act 2011 which prevent local authorities from building schools.
3. We will require local authorities, working individually or together, to assess the need for any additional places in schools or colleges. We will require them to produce rolling, three-year plans to meet the need with suitable, high quality provision and fund them accordingly.
4. We will also take urgent action to address the crisis in teacher recruitment and retention by addressing the issues of pay and workload and the excessive pressures of the accountability regime.
5. We will build the capacity of mainstream schools, colleges, universities and lifelong learning settings to enable the inclusion of Disabled pupils and students with/without SEN. This will include the support Disabled pupils and students need to participate in learning.
6. We will also take urgent action to end the scandal of vulnerable children and young people being out of school.

WHO ARE WE?

Reclaiming Education is supported by:

- Alliance for Inclusive Education
 - Campaign for State Education
 - Comprehensive Future
 - Forum (3-19 Comprehensive Education magazine)
 - Information for School and College Governors
 - New Visions Group
 - Rescue Our Schools
 - Socialist Educational Association
- in conjunction with other campaigning groups and trade unions.



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Local Accountability

7. We will create a comprehensive statutory framework fit for a new National Education Service covering all state-funded schools, subject to appropriate Parliamentary scrutiny.
8. The framework will make clear local authorities' responsibility for the strategic management of an education service.
9. We recognise the key role of stakeholders in the effective running of schools. We will publish a code of practice that requires all schools to have governance arrangements that represent parents, their children, staff and the wider community and ensure that all state funded schools abide by it.
10. Parents will be given effective rights of appeal in respect of school admissions and exclusions and the right to make complaints in respect of all state-funded schools.
11. We recognise that, due to cuts to local authority funding, experience and expertise have been lost, particularly as regards school improvement and management support. We will encourage the development of capacity at local and national levels, particularly through collaboration and through the re-allocation of resources from the national level to the local.
12. We will ensure that the overwhelming proportion of public funding is spent on front-line staff and withdraw funding from organisations that pay very high and unjustifiable salaries.

Medium-term

13. Because we are opposed to the melee of change that has characterised recent government interventions in education, we will consult widely on how best to achieve a smooth progression towards our aims.
14. In order to give shape and purpose to the new National Education Service, we will also begin a process of examining how best to allocate resources – in the longer term – “*from cradle to grave*”.
15. We will seek to end a fragmented approach to education and refocus attention on the wider benefits to society, including personal fulfilment as well as economic benefits such as improved health, productivity and crime reduction.
16. To prepare for this, we will take evidence as to how specific investments can contribute later benefits and savings, beginning with Early Years education.
17. We recognise the serious inequalities in educational opportunity and outcomes between different parts of the country. We will provide comprehensive support for the more disadvantaged areas through long term programmes not short-term “quick fixes”.
18. During our first year, we will begin wide consultations on creating mechanisms for reviewing and revising the curriculum and the system of national testing and examinations. With these mechanisms in place, Ministers will no longer intervene personally in curriculum and



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pedagogy, although we will use existing powers to put in place interim arrangements to ensure urgent revisions are dealt with speedily. We will ensure that all stakeholders including parents and employers play a full part in decision-making relating to the curriculum and examinations.

19. We believe that education should not be driven by market forces and competition between institutions. We will therefore encourage collaboration between institutions at all levels and ensure that accountability systems such as league tables and inspection support this change.
20. We believe that seeking to manage the education service centrally through the Department for Education is neither appropriate nor effective. As far as possible, and where there is capacity, we will devolve responsibility and funding from the national level to the local.

A skilled and valued profession

21. Working with their trade union representatives, we will begin a long-term process of making teachers and support staff a highly educated, trained and valued workforce.
22. A Labour government will redress the damage done by deregulation by committing to a national contract for teachers that will enable career progression and include a transparent pay structure and standardised terms and conditions.
23. We commit to rapid progress towards a qualified, graduate-led workforce.

Early Years and Primary Education

24. We will begin to restore the Sure Start network, focusing growth on the most disadvantaged areas. We will ensure that early years education is grounded in the best understanding of child development
25. We will ensure that all young people benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum which develops children's interests and talents and that the burden of testing and the associated narrowing of the curriculum is substantially reduced.

Ending Selection at 11

26. Selection by test at age 11 has led to a two-tier system of education that is grossly unfair to the great majority of children and families, often with lifelong negative consequences. Even within the comprehensive system, there is too much unofficial selection which prevents schools achieving a properly balanced intake.
27. We will legislate to prevent any school from being its own admission authority; admission criteria should be set and implemented by local authorities and should treat all schools and all families fairly and equally.
28. We will require future bids for resources from local authorities to show how selection will be phased out in favour of universal, high quality education up to age eighteen.

14 to 19 Education and Training

29. Although there was widespread support for the raising of the age of participation to eighteen, little has



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been done to follow through on this measure.

We believe that far too much effort is expended upon GCSE examinations which should not mark the end of young people's learning.

30. Without disrupting the studies of those already committed to these examinations, we will move towards a system which encourages a broad and balanced curriculum from age 14 to 19, including high quality academic, creative and technical courses and provides appropriate levels of study for all learners and clear avenues of progression beyond age eighteen.
31. There is also marked inefficiency in running small, free-standing sixth forms and we will require better collaboration between schools and colleges.
32. We will give high priority to 'technical pathway' courses recommended by the Sainsbury Review of post-16 education, whether provided in colleges or in the workplace. We will also ensure there is more straightforward access and that they are available without fees or loans.
33. No fees should be charged for post school education. Higher education should not be seen as a market place and students should not be regarded as customers.

Careers guidance

34. The path from full-time education to paid employment has been particularly uncertain in recent years. Recognising the vital importance of

excellent advice and guidance, independent of schools and colleges, we will develop a universal and effective service for all young people.

Universities

35. We will ensure that planning for HE provision provides security and stability for both universities and students, including the "post 1992" universities, which often make a greater contribution to social mobility than the more traditional universities.
36. All universities should do more to ensure they recruit a properly diverse student body. To support this, we will explore the option of basing admissions on actual rather than predicted grades.
37. We will require all universities to adopt fair employment practices and will ensure that they are properly accountable for their use of public resources.

Apprenticeships/continuing education

38. The apprenticeship levy paid by employers should become the basis of a reformed apprenticeship system. The quality of apprenticeships must be greatly improved and there must be a new impetus towards the provision of increased training opportunities across all sectors of the economy.
39. We will aim to review and develop a comprehensive and effective adult education service which meets the needs of all.

More information at www.reclaimingeducation.org.uk



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