



## **URGENT PRIORITIES - FUTURE PLANS**

***Policy ideas for improving educational opportunities and outcomes for all***

**Produced by the Fabian Education Policy Group**

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## CONTENTS

<b>FOREWORD</b>	3
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	4
1. Values	4
2. Establishing independence of key educational bodies	5
3. Equality, Social Justice and poverty	6
a. Equality	6
b. Social Justice	7
c. Poverty	8
4. Ways of working	10
<b>PHASE-SPECIFIC PROPOSALS</b>	12
5. Early Years	12
6. Further and Adult Education	13
7. Higher Education	14
8. SEND	16
9. Children and Young People (CYP) considered vulnerable and/or for whom outcomes are lower than average	18
10. Schools:	21
a. Curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and technology	21
b. Celebrating the Talents of Youth	
c. Climate change and sustainable living: Empowering CYP to tackle big environmental issues	25
d. Initial teacher education and CPD	26
	28
<b>CROSS-PHASE PROPOSALS</b>	31
11. Wellbeing: Supporting the whole child, school and community	31
12. Ofsted's future purpose, role, and identity	32
13. Education providers, the wider public interest, and the role of schools in meeting communities' needs	35
14. A coherent education system	36

## FOREWORD

"Urgent Priorities - Future Plans" was compiled after consultation with members of the Fabian Education Policy Group (FEPG). The document was open for written submissions during December 2020 and January 2021. After discussion and final oral submissions at a group meeting in January, the document was edited and prepared for publication by the FEPG Committee. In the end, approximately 50 members of the group contributed in some way.

We would like to thank all of them for their ideas. They represent a diverse, well-connected and highly-knowledgeable cross section of the education world, including parents, teachers, governors, lecturers, and professors.

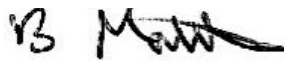
Each section is arranged in the same general format. We begin with a brief explanation of the key problems and issues, as a means of framing our argument and explaining why we feel our policy proposals are necessary. Where relevant, we add links to research and reports to further illustrate our points. After the initial explanation of the problem, we go on to list our policy responses in more detail.

The document's title reflects our feeling that any incoming Secretary of State would naturally have an immediate 'to do' list (urgent priorities), while simultaneously looking towards longer term projects and outcomes ('future plans').

However, we have resisted imposing any notion of our own about the order in which things should be tackled, and so our list of contents remains thematic.

Overall, we feel that we have produced a document that is genuinely 'Fabian' in tone.

Finally, it is important to note that this document is a starting point. Should you wish to pursue any of the policy proposals or explore further any of these policy areas, our group is ready to assist and to lend its expertise.



Brian Matthews Chair Education Fabians Policy Group

Committee: Chris Harris (vice chair), Alan Bainbridge, Valerie Bossman-Quarshie, Marilyn Leask, Mark Williams, Sarah Younie.

Please note: This document represents the views of contributing members of the *Fabians Education Policy Group* and not those of the Fabian Society as a whole.

## INTRODUCTION

### 1. Values

*Press statement:* Education systems are always based on values, even if implicit, that are transmitted to pupils. For example, our present system can give pupils the idea that the values of individualism and competition are the most important. For a healthy tolerant society and a strong democracy, it is vital that our children grow up with a strong and positive set of values which include respect for difference and democracy.

We will make sure such values underpin the curriculum, the relationships between teachers and children and the ways our schools and inspection systems operate and the rewards the nation's children receive from their schooling.

*Priority:* A key goal for Labour is to make the Labour Party's values as explicit as possible and ensure that policy decisions do not contradict them. Doing this should help to develop a coherent education system.

*Ways of achieving this priority:* Values are at the core of what we, as individuals and collectively as a society, do and how we act. They help to guide our behaviour and the way our society functions. If the Labour Party can define its values and express them clearly the arguments for change are more likely to be understandable and coherent.

It might appear easy to name some values, such as cooperation, equality, and so on. The Fabians Education Policy Group has some strategies to help in the process of identification of values and the creation of consensus around values, but it is beyond the scope of the document to detail them. For example, the principles underpinning the Labour Party's flagship policy "Every Child Matters", which resulted in the setting up of SureStart is a powerful starting point.

Matthews (2021) gives more detail.

#### *Reference:*

Matthews, B. (2021). Aims and values: direction with purpose. In B. Hudson, M. Leask, & S. Younie (Eds.), *Education System Design: Foundations, Policy Options and Consequences*. (pp. 20-30). Abingdon, Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.  
<https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/education-system-design-brian-hudson-marilyn-leask-sarah-younie/e/10.4324/9780429261190>

## 2. Establishing independence of key educational bodies

*Press statement:* The Education System in England is desperately in need of stability and clear direction based on professional knowledge, research and evidence and consultation with stakeholders, rather than, as now, on ideological positioning. We have a long-term vision for improvement not subject to the whims of secretaries of state enacting a change agenda driven often by personal hubris and political posturing. (See Michael Gove's interference with the teaching of reading as one damaging example. Nick Gibb's insecurity in the field leading him to rely on those that simply support his viewpoints is another).

*Priority:* To achieve sustained improvement. National education policies need stability in system structures and roles, together with a long-term vision for improvement which is not subject to single party ideology, together with enabling strategies.

*Ways of achieving this priority:* We propose a 10 year plan based on all-party consensus. To depoliticise education sector decisions we propose the establishment of a new organisation called Education England, based on the New Zealand concept of the "Crown Entity". The body will have the responsibility to be the foundation stone of society and be established to advance the common good, to manage and maintain reforms within a stable framework. Education England would work to achieve all-party 'buy-in' into the purpose, principles and structures of the English education system and the concept of a ten-year plan for education for the common good. With governance representing major political parties and stakeholders, proposed major changes in the education system would require a 'supermajority' (perhaps 2/3 of those eligible to vote) to be accepted. Pilling et al. (2018) explains this is a requirement in the UK Parliament to change the Fixed Term Parliaments Act and is a common way of ensuring cross-party support for change which is used in other countries. Hudson et.al. (2021) provides more detail.

*Funding:* A review of current DfE expenditure should identify areas for considerable savings. The National Audit Office (NAO) (a body independent of the government and civil service) holds government to account for the way it spends public money . The NAO audits the finances and scrutinises public spending of government departments. The NAO has identified laxness in the Department for Education (DfE) management of public money. Their reports identify ways of making savings. For example, the surplus held by academies is public money which is intended to be spent on education, not hoarded. "At 31 August 2018, the academies sector had a total surplus for the year of £3.0 billion"(NAO, 2019, part 1, 1/2). West and Wolfe (2018) identify a lack of transparency in DfE expenditure of public funds. Curbing DfE excessive expenditure on privileged teacher training routes and organisations favoured by ministers as well as on non-tendered contracts can be expected to save funds which can be used for the public good.

*References:*

National Audit Office (NAO) (2019) *Departmental Overview 2019: Department for Education*.  
<https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Departmental-Overview-2019-Departm>

[ent-for-Education.pdf](#)

Pilling, J. et al. (July 2018) *Report of the Independent Commission on Referendums*. The Constitution Unit, UCL.

[https://www.ucl.ac.uk/constitution-unit/sites/constitution-unit/files/182\\_-\\_independent\\_commission\\_on\\_referendums.pdf](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/constitution-unit/sites/constitution-unit/files/182_-_independent_commission_on_referendums.pdf)

West, A. and Wolfe, D. (2018) *Academies, the School System in England and a Vision for the Future*. London. LSE and Matrix Chambers.

<http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/88240/1/Academies%20Vision%20Report%202020JUNE.pdf>

B. Hudson, M. Leask, & S. Younie. (2021) Education England: from chaos to consensus? In Hudson, B., Leask, M. and Younie, S. (2021) *op. cit.* (pp. 64-78).

### 3. Equality, social justice and poverty

#### 3a Equality

*Press statement:* Equality is important as your child will do best when they are valued for what they can do. Then they will build a strong sense of self-worth and positive learner identity. Focussing on different views and perspectives can lead to understanding, creativity, and new and inclusive ways of thinking.

*Priority:* Educational outcomes are consistently linked to differences in socioeconomic status/poverty, gender and ethnicity limiting the opportunities of a significant proportion of the population. To create a just, equitable and peaceful society we need to ensure that all children, irrespective of their background (gender, ethnicity or social class etc.) are valued and respected for what they can bring to their learning and working with others.

Equality, social justice, which includes relieving poverty, are complex areas which cannot be dealt with here in depth or by the education system alone. However, in the following sections, actions are proposed which work to minimise the impact of these issues on individual's educational outcomes.

Here are some important pointers.

*Ways of achieving this priority:* Equal access to supportive education environments and to the resources needed for learning in the modern world.

Children, as far as possible, should be in diverse classrooms. Teaching strategies should help children think about their personal interactions with different people and which include activities to fulfil personal interests and talents, while also making learners aware of alternative social, cultural and

belief systems (Matthews 2006).

Such classrooms should:

- Have curriculum elements that raise all aspects of equality including LGBT, BAME.
- Develop trans-disciplinary Civic Education organised in problem solving styled, collaborative 'Rich Tasks'. These curriculum opportunities will be grounded in critical thinking, discussion of power relations, cultural diversity, and sustainability to enable content can be localised. They will facilitate 'deep learning' outcomes.

One key factor in forging equity is for people to learn to understand each other, empathise, and see difference as a positive aspect of life, rather than finding it a source of anxiety. Anxiety over difference is for example a basis of sexism, racism and homophobia. The anxiety is usually generic so that a person who is racist is likely to be anti different sexualities. Ideally, with the strategies indicated above, as a society we can develop habits of mind so pupils will, in their interactions, naturally come to enjoy difference and understand with empathy across difference. Teachers should make explicit how, for example, gender, sexuality and social class can affect interactions. These interactions should be made explicit in a way that enables pupils to process them.

*The following texts provide supporting evidence: contact theory (Allport, 1979; Pettigrew, Tropp, Wagner & Christ, 2011) research found that interpersonal contact and dialogue was an effective way of reducing prejudice between majority and minority groups. Positive outcomes included greater trust, empathy and reduced anxiety. The effects appear to be universal across cultures, gender and sexuality (Pettigrew et al., 2011). It is crucial to realise that people can find it difficult to understand others and to learn to empathise (Taylor, 1994). The psychological dynamic processes involved when people meet to engage in dialogue are crucial to psychological recognition and understanding of each other (Matthews 2006).*

### **3b Social Justice**

*Press statement: Covid-19 has laid bare the injustices of social class and ethnicity. The solution to these injustices lie beyond education, but schools have an important mitigating influence that has both immediate and lifelong outcomes. There should be a clear set of policies for closing the gap and ensuring that all young people have access to quality learning environments at home and school. It is acknowledged that education is presented with the task of increasing social mobility. Although education cannot overcome all the systemic structures that underpin and support inequality, it can become the site of social cohesion where inequality and injustice can be exposed, thought about and positive ways forward suggested.*

Social justice is not only about economic matters, but also involves oppression and domination of people and the natural world. These are very complex issues, but there are many aspects that hold back people, especially those from different social classes.

*Priority: Academic selection only serves to confirm existing social inequalities therefore 11-plus selection and academic segregation should be ended, accompanied by a move towards comprehensive education for all. (Note 11-plus test scores are secret currently, we suggest they are included in the public National Pupil Database (which contains Statutory Assessment Tests and other*

public data) to ensure openness and accountability of the system while it lasts.

*Ways of achieving this priority:* There is much evidence to show that mixed ability classrooms produce the same academic results as streamed classes, but produce better social outcomes. However, there would be a great benefit in projects to develop mixed ability curriculum materials. To move towards comprehensive education, at least in the first place by having an admission system run by Local Authorities (LAs). (Suggestions are in the internal Fabian Education Policy Group's Bluesky document which records emerging ideas).

Private/Public Schools are a major source of injustice:

- Increase the number of state boarding schools to give choice to and accommodate the needs of parents and children e.g. vulnerable children who would benefit from such provision.
- Gradually reduce the attractiveness of private schools for parents who want their children to be in the élite: oblige private/public schools in receipt of a subsidy through charitable status to offer 'free' places for disadvantaged children with costs matching the state subsidy received.
- No public money should be used to fund the private sector.
- Return to the idea that fee-paying schools should lose their charitable status (bearing in mind this is a legal minefield). Kyanston and Green in their book *Engines of Privilege* (2019, chapter 2) give a full account of attempts to do just this over the last 50 years.

### **3c Poverty**

*Press statement:* Schools cannot solve the problems of poverty created by society: low wages, lack of affordable housing and depressed aspiration. However we should not accept that family poverty will prevent children making the most of their lives. Their education should equip them with skills, knowledge, understanding about how to and opportunities to make the most of their lives.

The findings of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's extensive research into poverty and education provide justification for action (Hirsch 2007 p2):

- "Low income is a strong predictor of low educational performance.
- White children in poverty have on average lower educational achievement and are more likely to continue to under-achieve. Overall, boys are more likely to have low results than girls, especially those of Bangladeshi, Pakistani and black African origin.
- Just 14 percent of variation in individuals' performance is accounted for by school quality. Most variation is explained by other factors, underlining the need to look at the range of children's experiences, inside and outside school, when seeking to raise achievement." and;
- "Out-of-school activities can help build self-confidence. Children from advantaged backgrounds experience more structured and supervised out-of-school activities.
- Many children and young people who become disaffected with school develop strong resentments about mistreatment (such as perceived racial discrimination). Work with disaffected young people is most effective where it makes them feel more involved in their own futures. Equality of educational opportunity must address multiple aspects of disadvantaged children's lives.
- These factors are at the heart of the social divide in educational outcomes, but have not been central in solutions so far. Measures to improve the extent to which disadvantaged children engage in education



are elusive, but cannot be neglected.”

*Priority:* All schools to identify children at risk of having poverty blight their learning and develop risk mitigation plans to provide these children with extra support.

*Ways of achieving the priority:*

- Schools successful in this area should share their solutions. Inspections should check policies and practice. The following are some examples:
  - All schools to have a Student Equality Officer tasked with opening doors to opportunity for these children and helping them set and achieve goals for themselves.
  - Sharing of practice between schools and agencies to be facilitated by online networking.
  - Volunteer Mentors from local communities or online- perhaps retired teachers - may provide useful support in some areas (subject to child safety checks).
  - Business Mentors provide another route to developing understanding of how they can find a place in the world (subject to child safety checks).
  - Places on online programmes supporting personalised learning e.g. in the core subjects to be provided for these children along with existing breakfast and afterschool clubs providing food, advice, skill development.
  - Digital tools and connectivity to educational resources out of school should be available to all.
- See the ‘Rich Tasks’ proposal for personally driven learning in the Curriculum section.
- See the proposal for the virtual FE college and for more state boarding schools.
- Support for out of school activities
- Re-establish a dedicated national service along the lines of ‘Connexions’, aimed at 13-19 year olds and dedicated to encouraging multi-agency working in the service of this cohort.

*References:*

Allport, G. W. (1979). *The Nature of Prejudice*. Addison-Wesley (Originally published in 1954).

Blandford, S. (2021) Social mobility: a working class view. In Hudson, Leask and Younie op. cit.

Hirsch, D. (2009) Experiences of poverty and educational disadvantage. Joseph Rowntree Foundation. <https://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/default/files/jrf/migrated/files/2123.pdf>.

Kynaston, D., & Green, F. (2019). *Engines of Privilege*. Editura Bloomsbury Publishing.

Matthews, B. (2006). *Engaging Education. Developing Emotional Literacy, Equity and Co-education*. McGraw-Hill/Open University Press.

Pettigrew, T., Tropp, L., Wagner, U., & Christ, O. (2011). *Recent Advances in Intergroup Contact Theory*. International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 35(3), 271-280.

Taylor, C. (1994). The politics of recognition. In A. Gutman (Ed.), *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*. (pp. 25-74). Princeton University Press.

#### 4. Ways of working

*Press statement:* The way we work is so important for society, for our lives, enjoyment and getting jobs completed through effective problem solving strategies. We will develop ways of working that strengthen positive relationships between all stakeholders.

*Priorities:* To have an excellent transformative education system, the ways of working that people are involved in have as large an impact as what they are working on. We suggest:

- Ensuring civil servants and stakeholders work to foster an environment fostering collaboration to achieve consensus.
- That an unintended policy consequences review panel is established.
- That funding priorities are used to readjust the education system to be locally accountable and responsive.
- That a Labour legacy review is held as soon as possible to identify powerful transformational policies that can be quickly reinstated.

*Ways of achieving these priorities:*

- **Collaboration to achieve consensus** would be the required ways of working for civil servants: Civil servants would be expected to work with experts, with voluntary, professional and subject organisations (via the Council for Subject Associations (CfSA)) and, with unions in developing consensus around policies. For any policy there should at the very least be a shared understanding of benefits and disbenefits as perceived by different interest groups. Privileged access to ministers by a vocal few as now would be discontinued. No-one - not even the Secretary of State - should have the monopoly on ideas, nor should he or she have the right to impose those ideas unopposed. (Note: the current government has adopted an anti-intellectual agenda and so has missed opportunities to work with subject specialists and educators with extensive experience. For example, they are influenced by the alumni organisation Teach First which is part of a closed international network with vocal advocates with little experience but who are trained to consider they are a leadership elite. Placing people with this mindset in influential positions within government is a goal of the Teach First/ Teach for All agendas which espouse lower standard teacher training for expediency.
- **Unintended policy consequences review panel:** With all changes, independent checks for unintended consequences would be included through a Children's Commissioner led review panel to include a representative sample of practising headteachers and teacher educators (i.e. practitioners not administrators).
- **Funding** for schools would prioritise locally responsive, national and international collaborations focused on improving outcomes for *every child* in the community. Prioritising funding for these activities is a mechanism for ensuring the less desirable closed practices from closed Academy networks wither.
- **Labour legacy review:** In 2010, Labour developed a legacy of world-leading national education agencies focused on promoting research-based approaches to the curriculum, assessment,

pedagogy supported by educational technologies. Labour would ensure specialist units e.g on education technology, curriculum, assessment, SEND, early years, qualifications, initial and continuing teacher training. Under Labour these agencies were very effective at bringing about national change for the benefit of young people and in liaising internationally to benchmark our practices against those in similar countries. If they had still existed during the pandemic, children's learning, online teaching and homeschooling would have been of a much higher standard. Under Labour, the DFE will build on this legacy through working with experts: education sector businesses, teachers and teacher educator organisations for the benefit of all children. Labour is not afraid to consult with experts. Cronyism, as now, in the awarding of contracts is not the way Labour works. Brighouse (2021) provides informative historical background.

*Reference:*

Brighouse, T., (2021). A 'National Education Service': what can we learn from the past? In Hudson, B., Leask, M. and Younie, S. *op. cit.* (pp 43-55).

## PHASE-SPECIFIC PROPOSALS

### 5. Early Years

*Press statement:* “Disadvantaged children benefit significantly from good quality pre-school experiences...children at age 11 still show benefits from attendance at high-quality pre-schools (Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford, Taggart, 2010). Early years is a priority so all children have a good start in the 7 key areas of learning within the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which are:

- Personal, social and emotional development.
- Communication and language.
- Physical development.
- Literacy.
- Mathematics.
- Understanding the world.
- Expressive arts and design.

*Priorities:*

- Labour should recapture the energy and focus on Education it has had in the past.
- It should ‘return’ and recapture the spirit of the Every Child Matters agenda (a previous Labour policy which worked).
- Sure Start (a previous Labour policy which worked) also needs a nationwide restart. This was evidence-based policy, from research on how effective ‘early interventions’ increase children’s life chances and attainment. Sure Start still exists in some areas: see the annual NI evaluations.

*Ways of achieving the priorities:* While there is a strong argument for working on the same aims and in similar ways as before, new ideas for a ‘Sure Start’ are as follows:

- Establish Early Years care and education centres for all deprived areas and as a highly skilled and highly prized job by having clear and attractive training and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) pathways for those working in this area.
- Encourage more men to work in pre-school and early years education.
- Abolish the current Government’s scheme of baseline testing of four year olds. Be clear on the rationale for doing so, viz. it is too early to label children, and besides individual institutions are best left to do their own baseline testing for diagnostic and formative evaluation purposes.
- Give full consideration to the proposals, when made, by the current Early Years Commission jointly organised by the Fabian Society ( <https://earlyyearscommission.org> ).

*Funding:* The same arguments that were put to the treasury by Baroness Morris, Secretary of State for

education in the previous administration apply. [Current funding is explained on gov.uk.](#)

*References:*

The EPPE research mentioned - a longitudinal study of children - was used to justify the Treasury spend on Sure Start by a Labour Government. See this parliament.uk link: **The development of Children's Centres** Section 14) "In 2010 the latest findings from the EPPE research were published, reporting that children at age 11 still show benefits from attendance at high-quality pre-schools. [Sylva et al. 2010]"

Professor Kathy Sylva's publications provide detailed evidence about the benefits of early years educational interventions. <http://www.education.ox.ac.uk/people/kathy-sylva/>

Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I., Taggart, B. (2010) *Early Childhood Matters: evidence from the Effective Pre-School and Primary Education Project*. Taylor & Francis. <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/early-childhood-matters-kathy-sylva-edward-melhuish-pam-sammons-iram-siraj-blatchford-brenda-taggart/e/10.4324/9780203862063>

## 6. Further and Adult Education

*Press statement:* Learning is lifelong and we all need to keep up to date or have the opportunity to try something new. We believe that people should be able to learn throughout life, regardless of their location in the country.

Further and Adult education has been neglected despite its critical role in engaging adults from the most disadvantaged backgrounds in making the first crucial steps into education, training, and employment. Adult education such as evening classes and Union Learning provide an opportunity for a vital second or third chance to develop skills, interests or a career. The skills to use online educational technologies are now widely held across the country, and these technologies support much needed innovation to achieve this provision.

*Priorities:*

- Restore funding to at least the levels of 2009/10.
- Ensure that there are suitable and sustainable systems in place to enable all adults to access education and training throughout life.

*Ways of achieving the priorities:*

- Building on Labour's flagship Open University concept, establish, with Further Education (FE) partners, a Virtual/Open FE college to give near universal just-in-time access to training and qualifications especially for those in remote/rural areas or who have work/family

responsibilities. See the Australian [TAFE Digital example](#). This extends the earlier ‘night school’ or correspondence school concepts.

- [Develop and action](#) a Lifelong Learning Plan with the sector and local communities, a government wide consultation that highlights how learning new skills as an adult supports the economy, improves productivity, facilitates integration and improves personal wellbeing.
- Encourage local authorities to work with local course providers and the media to publicise courses available locally and encourage wide coverage.
- Include a review of provision in the local education stakeholder meetings referenced in [Levelling Up Adult Community Education | FETL](#).
- [Develop and establish local adult education organiser teams](#). These would be based in villages, towns and cities with funding provided to reclaim or replace the buildings, purchased and maintained via taxpayers’ money, once dedicated to adult education.
- Drawing on strengths from within the community adult educators would be properly trained and supported, particularly by nearby colleges and other education providers.
- Re-establish the [Union Learning Fund](#) to encourage union members to develop new knowledge and skills, encourage positive civic interest and an active democracy.

*References and evidence: **see hyperlinks in text***

Australia’s [TAFE Digital](#) - virtual FE College: <https://www.tafensw.edu.au/digital>

Butcher, J. (2019). Free adult education is vital for a healthy economy – and UK politicians are finally starting to get this. *The Conversation*, November 14th, 2019

Crawley, J. (2015). Adult education needs an urgent and radical rethink. *The Conversation*, March 30th, 2019.

Institute for Fiscal Studies (2019) 12% fall since 2010: Further education has faced the biggest cuts in recent years. In: *FE News*: 19 September 2019

FETL (Further Education Trust for Leadership). (2021). *Levelling Up Adult Community Education: What Does the Data Tell Us?*

## **7. Higher Education (HE)**

This area is complex and deserves a fuller paper. Some key points are included.

*Press statement:* Our country depends upon our higher education to develop the skills and knowledge to forge new and creative ideas to enhance our country (House of Commons Library, 2021).

Higher education provides an opportunity to research, explore and to think difficult and often

different thoughts to solve contemporary problems, to record our history and so on. The production of a vaccine to combat the challenge of Covid-19 (Drayton and Waltmann, 2020) provides one example of the value of higher education to our societies, another is the challenge of how we can build a sustainable planet including changing behaviours. Yet another is research into constitutional matters so we protect our democracy.

Higher and Further education should be planned together to be responsive to local contexts, to open doors for all and to ensure future generations have the skills and knowledge to meet society's developing challenges.

*Priorities:* Examples include:

- Review the ways universities function to ensure a match with society's needs.
- Work with FE and HE leaders to develop a comprehensive system meeting national and local needs and to identify barriers and ways of overcoming them.
- Review funding of universities, ways of working and the student contribution.

*Ways of achieving the priorities:* Examples include:

- Review funding (House of Commons Library, 2020) including funding for research to ensure public money is used to meet local and national needs by FE and university sectors working together at the local level. Supporting the Russell Group/post-92 hierarchy reinforces some of the negative undercurrents in British society which suppress aspiration and divide society. The national Research Assessment Exercise has found that excellence exists in individual human beings, not university buildings and excellence in teaching and research can be found in all types of institutions. Modern technologies support cost-effective networking of researchers and academics to work on shared problems and this way of working across institutions of different types could be prioritised in the national allocations of research funding. The EU Erasmus model of funding research, through collaborative inter-country networks, provides a model to replicate.
- Review the advantages and disadvantages of the Teaching Excellence Framework, Research Excellence Framework and Knowledge Exchange Framework to identify and mitigate the negative impacts of marketisation and competition.
- Encourage links with local community and Adult/FE provision and not just global outreach and research income. Universities should be intellectual and physical resources for the local and regional community.
- Reintroduce the student grant system – any loans that are required should be interest free and limited to a 25 year repayment period.
- Engage the sector in planning policy changes to include the role of universities in shaping Britain's future.

*Funding:* Creative funding solutions need to be found to the student fees and maintenance grant challenge. The Erasmus model for collaborative research between institutions shows how research networks can draw on and build knowledge and expertise available in different locations. Pre-technology models of concentrating research funding in selected organisations no longer apply.

*References and Evidence:*

House of Commons Library (2021). Higher education funding in England. Briefing Paper, 7393, 8th February, 2021.

House of Commons Library (2020). Student Loan Statistics. Briefing Paper, 1079, 9th December, 2020.

Drayton, E. Waltmann, B. (2020). Will universities need a bailout to survive the COVID-19 crisis? The Institute for Fiscal Studies, July 2020.

## **8. Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).**

*Press statement:* A truly civil society administers to the needs of everybody, and values everybody for what they are. It is important that all children and young people (CYP) feel able, and receive due encouragement, to find their own place in society. They should not be defined by their disability, and education has a central role to play in this process of acceptance and development.

*Priorities:* Some of the key metrics for assessing performance on SEND make concerning reading (see further the NAO's report from 2019). Tackling them objectively and purposefully should be among the very first priorities of a new Secretary of State.

There is a funding crisis: In 2017-18 for example, 81.3% of LAs overspent their high needs budget, and between 2013 and 2018 there was a real terms reduction of 2.6% in funding for high needs pupils.

Outcomes for SEND pupils can be poor. For example, in 2017/18 the proportion of permanent exclusions involving SEND children was 44.9%.

The performance of Local Authorities also gives cause for concern. As of July 2019, joint Ofsted/CQC inspections had graded 50% of their SEND departments as underperforming.

*Ways of achieving these priorities:* We feel that it is time for the government to 'champion' the needs of SEND children and young people, by clearly and consistently focusing on this cohort. The statistics quoted above show that outcomes for this group have been lagging for years. The pandemic is only likely to have made things generally worse. Therefore, the Minister for Children and Families- acting energetically and to the fullest extent permitted by his or her remit- would have a key role to play. The Minister would be able to focus on improving outcomes by being the 'champion' of CYP with SEND in government, and by working with colleagues from related departments.

### **SEND Funding:**

- Education resources for this vulnerable group need proper investment based on actual levels of need.



- Consider ring fencing SEND funding to tackle the almost universal shortfall in SEND spending in LAs. Treating SEND funding as a separate stream from the mainstream schools' budget will avoid the awkward trade-offs that many LAs currently find themselves having to make.
- Within the first nine months of a Labour Government all LAs should submit a full audit of current local SEND provision and spending carried out by representatives of teaching staff and unions, parent groups, local authority members and knowledgeable others. This will enable gaps in funding and provision to be identified, realistic budgets to be drawn up, and spending to be properly targeted and subsequently monitored for effective meeting of needs.

### **Inclusive Practice**

Ensure provision for SEND pupils and students is adequately matched to need and demand in every local area. There is a need for clear training pathways and qualifications for teachers for different aspects of SEND.

Ensure accountability structures do not either inadvertently mean some mainstream schools do not want to offer a place to a SEND student; that SEND students are forced into a curriculum that is inappropriate; or that SEND students are denied access to the full curriculum:

- Inclusive practice in institutions should address all protected characteristics in the Equality Act. It should be embedded in Initial Teacher Education. It should also be given adequate and consistent coverage as part of CPD within schools and colleges.
- Review the role of the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) in mainstream schools and colleges. Identify the best practice for the role and ensure that an agreeable minimum of professional standards are adhered to in all institutions. If the review raises serious concerns, this could pave the way for administering SEND within mainstream settings more effectively and equitably.
- Ensure SEND is given coverage across local and regional schools' partnerships and similar networks. Allow Special Schools to take the lead in delivering CPD and sharing best practice with their mainstream counterparts.

### **Education Health Care Plans**

7 years on from the Children and Families Act 2014, bad practice and inconsistencies remain. A Labour Government should ensure that the recommendations of all relevant reviews are implemented (e.g. NAO [2019], Commons Education Select Committee [2020].) It should also require LAs to adhere to a common model for Educational Healthcare Plans (EHCPs) that put the emphasis on clarity.

The whole EHCP and SEND system is widely perceived- and experienced- as an overly complex, slow, and often attritional process:

- All parents and families should have access to an impartial 'guide', working apart from LAs, and who is there to act as a point of reference, becoming in effect (and possibly in job title) a case manager.
- Approximately 90% of SEND cases going to tribunal are won by families (but one should always be mindful that many cases never make it to tribunal, because pursuing due redress can be an exhausting and costly process for families).

*References:*

House of Commons Education Select Committee. (2019). *Special Educational Needs and Disabilities*.  
<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201919/cmselect/cmeduc/20/2002.htm>

National Audit Office (NAO). (2019). *Support for Children With Special Educational Needs and Disabilities*.  
<https://www.nao.org.uk/report/support-for-pupils-with-special-educational-needs-and-disabilities/>

National Audit Office (NAO). (2019). Department for Education Departmental Overview 2019.  
<https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Departmental-Overview-2019-Department-for-Education.pdf>

In 2010, Labour produced a legacy of SEND online and printed materials for mainstream teachers. Gove removed teacher access to these along with all the Labour government funded teachers' resources, but they could be retrieved from the National Archives and made accessible once more.

**9. Children and Young People (CYP) considered vulnerable and/or for whom outcomes are lower than average**

*Press statement:* A truly civil society administers to the needs of everybody, and values everybody for what they are. It is important that all children and young people are valued and have a place in society. They should not be defined by their difficulties or what might become a barrier to achievement. Education has a central role to play in this process of true acceptance by society, overcoming barriers, and enabling self-development.

*Priority:* Improving educational outcomes for all children.

Develop policies to meet the needs of smaller cohorts of CYP who are often overlooked, and whose education and social outcomes often give cause for concern. These cohorts include (but are not limited to) the following::

- Looked after children (LAC).
- Children in Need (CIN).
- Pupils who qualify for the Pupil Premium Grant (including the Free School Meals (FSM) cohort).
- Young carers.
- Learners who belong to the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller cohort (who may often have difficulties accessing LA services in addition to education).

- Children from particular minority ethnic groups whose educational outcomes are on average below those of their peers.
- Children from lower income backgrounds.
- Learners for whom outcomes can be lower generally (e.g. summer born children).

*Ways of achieving this priority:* We would like to see a clear and consistent focus on improving outcomes for CYP in cohorts such as those outlined above. Underpinning this drive to improve could be a clearer and more consistent reference to these groups in governmental, political and the general discourse: Arguably for these groups it is very often a case of ‘out of sight, out of mind’.

Where applicable, we feel that there is scope to benchmark the performance of the United Kingdom in working with such groups against the practices and performance of other countries.

### **Policy proposals:**

CYP in these groups should have personal support plans to support them in building their resilience and to achieve in line with their peers.

We would like there to be clarification on the kinds of data educational institutions keep on CYP who fall into these groups, and whether the registers of CYP in these groups should be broadened. For example, we know that schools have a register of Looked After Children (LAC), Children in Need (CIN), and Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) pupils. Do we now want to make it standard practice that they are required to know if a child has caring responsibilities? Do we want schools to pay closer attention to a child’s Date of Birth? Perhaps the answer is ‘yes’ if we have a clear sense of using this knowledge to enable access to further support in school.

There may be scope to increase the focus on vulnerable groups during the school and college inspection process (so long as confidentiality is observed in the final published report).

We would like to see joined-up working across government to identify the key barriers to progress for these cohorts. This would possibly mean reviewing the data on outcomes, reviewing the research literature, and making recommendations for action accordingly.

We also feel that there is more scope for the government to harness the expertise of third sector organisations (e.g. NSPCC, carers’ networks and so on) to advise and help devise programmes aimed at tackling disadvantage.

As with the proposal on SEND above, we feel that it is time for central government to ‘champion’ the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged CYP, by clearly and consistently focusing on these cohorts. Again, we feel that the Minister for Children and Families - acting energetically and to the fullest extent permitted by his or her remit - would have a key role to play.

We would anticipate that for the Minister to fulfill this ‘championing’ role would require not just close working with colleagues across Whitehall, but also collaboration with colleagues at a local level, such as the Local Government Association and specific LAs. If it were too complex, or the demands are too great for one office, then we would advocate creating a ‘Minister for Vulnerable CYP’ to focus on

these groups, liaise with key stakeholders and other bodies, and help generate policy.

We suggest that unless absolutely necessary, children in care continue to attend their school so as not to disrupt personal friendships and support systems.

*References for background evidence:*

Berridge, D., and Luke, N. (2020). *Educational attainment of children in need & children in care*. Nuffield Foundation.  
<https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/project/educational-attainment-of-children-in-need-children-in-care>

Jay, M. and McGrath-Lone, L. (2019). *Educational outcomes of children in contact with social care in England: a systematic review*. Systematic Reviews Volume 8, Article number: 155. Systematic Reviews Journal. <https://systematicreviewsjournal.biomedcentral.com/>

UK Government. (2020). *Statistics: looked-after children*.  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-looked-after-children>

For data on educational outcomes for LAC see the latest DfE data for 2019:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/884758/CLA\\_Outcomes\\_Main\\_Text\\_2019.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/884758/CLA_Outcomes_Main_Text_2019.pdf)

The Nuffield Foundation have published a recent study on the educational attainment of children in need (i.e. still at home though facing challenges) and children in care (looked after by the LA):  
<https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/project/educational-attainment-of-children-in-need-children-in-care>

This House of Commons Library briefing provides an overview of the Pupil Premium Grant, including references to research evaluating its impact:  
<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn06700/>

This HoC Library briefing on Summer born children is mainly about the question of deferred starting times for school, but also gives a useful overview of some of the general problems for the summer born, together with links to more in-depth research:  
<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-7272/>

## 10. Schools

### 10a Curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and education technologies

*Press Statements:* None of us can predict what each child will achieve in life but we can give them the tools to succeed on their own terms.

**Our promise to parents and young people** is a richer and broader education entitlement than the current offer, with high expectations for all, which opens doors and provides pathways to personal flourishing, excellence and fulfilment.

We need every child to know they can make a valuable unique contribution to our society, whether that is through art, music, science, health, technology or bringing up their families to treasure our democracy and our tolerance of others different from ourselves.

Technologies have a key role to play in providing access to the latest research-based knowledge supporting high quality teaching, lifelong development of teacher knowledge and providing stimulating learning opportunities.

***This means*** at the early years and primary level parents and children can expect:

- A challenging, but enjoyable broad curriculum providing the necessary foundation of knowledge and skills for later years and fostering positive attitudes towards learning and fellow beings. Such positive attitudes provide the foundation for an inclusive, tolerant, secure and happy democratic society.

***This means*** at the secondary and further education level parents and young people can expect:

- To have the freedom to choose from a broad range of subjects which provide the foundations for their life choices.
- That the subjects will be taught in ways which develop each child's ability to think, to reason, to seek and assess evidence, to argue, to be creative, to perform.

***This means*** that the examination system will be reformed:

- Final assessments need to match these aspirations for teaching, not just be dependent on recall. We know assessment over time is fairer, that through assessed coursework students develop skills of problem solving, research, project management and persistence which will help young people throughout their lives. Assessment which judges an individual's ability to

retain facts for short periods has a role in this educational environment but is not the only judge of achievement and attainment. Flexible assessment points, using technologies, allowing assessments to be taken when an individual is ready will have a role to play in some concepts in some subjects. Independent/local study submissions leading to formal assessment will be included in line with best practice in teaching and learning - for topics to be relevant to the learners and linked with their existing knowledge. We would consult on best practice worldwide, as well as with world leading experts in the assessment field, to produce a fair rational assessment system. Reliance on single end point assessment is not in the best interests of learners and through international benchmarking we expect to identify savings in the current expensive system.

Prior to implementing such a radical overhaul, we would of course also consult our partners. in education: the business community, the education profession, and the public, (e.g. a Citizen's Assembly") to make sure our proposals were the right ones. No responsible Government should ever make the mistakes of the past, having exam systems dictated by a single Secretary of State, and millions of young lives altered on a whim and the stroke of a pen.

*Priorities (changes for DFE teams to implement):*

- Curriculum reform.
- Assessment systems would be overhauled.
- Qualifications would be overhauled.
- Technology and equity.
- Accountability structures.

*Ways of achieving the priorities:*

**Curriculum Reform** is required to create a rich and diverse 21st curriculum. National curriculum reviews will be undertaken regularly to ensure the curriculum prepares learners for the 21st Century not the 19th Century as now.

The curriculum content will go beyond acquisition of facts and be reframed around pedagogic opportunities for learners to develop the 4 Cs': collaboration, critical thinking, communication and creativity (as recommended the [OECD \(2021\)](#) and teamwork and creativity (as recommended by the [CBI, \(2019\) Personal, Learning and Thinking Skills \(PLTS\)](#)).

We will produce a curriculum for the 21st century to enable pupils to get jobs, be creative and promote wellbeing. The curriculum will be reviewed to encompass / reflect modern Britain and its diverse voices while not shying away from the debates about the glorious as well as inglorious nature of the past. To do so, will assist learners in developing as democratic emotionally resilient citizens: for instance, understanding different political ideologies and key contemporary issues like the environment as well as giving a broader historical context.

Schools will be accountable to the communities they serve and will have the freedom to adapt part of the curriculum to link with the industries and FE colleges in that area. Local communities and businesses working with schools will review the curriculum with a particular focus on including '[rich](#)

task' cross-disciplinary learning relevant to individuals, their aspirations and/or their local context leading to formal assessment outcomes. Existing examples of successful practice are provided by the International Baccalaureate core curriculum components: The extended essay, and Creativity, activity, service - and the previous Certificate of Secondary Education (CSE) Mode 3 programmes which were tailored to local contexts. (Evidence for this approach: Social Mobility Commission's Long Shadow of Deprivation longitudinal study).

Every child, with or without special needs and disabilities, with and without wealthy parents, regardless of their heritage will have the opportunity of experiencing a challenging but rich and stimulating curriculum.

The Curriculum would acknowledge the value of stimulating multiple intelligences. There will be parity of academic, technical and creative subjects and qualifications and (within this) opportunities for personalised pathways for learners with different aptitudes and skill sets.

The Curriculum will encompass key skills (Mathematics, English and IT) and beyond that will be increasingly interdisciplinary, agile and reflective of our modern world (Harris 2021).

Technologies have a key role to play in providing access to the latest research-based knowledge supporting high quality teaching, lifelong development of teacher knowledge and providing stimulating learning opportunities. Building on the emerging practices from online teaching during Covid-19, learning from the collaborative online learning hubs in other countries such as Scotland's GlowConnect, and working with the media, universities and professional/subject associations, Labour will ensure our teachers and learners have access to resources/simulations/networks which support their work. Labour could create an online education knowledge service equivalent to medicine's National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) Pathways in providing access to quality assured knowledge which draws on experimental work undertaken across the education sector such as EPPI systematic research maps and the complementary MESHGuide research summaries.

**Assessment systems would be overhauled** so that pupils are evaluated on what they can achieve in a broad set of contexts that also include collaboration, creativity and aspects of the creative arts and physical activity. Where sensible, assessment processes could use technologies efficiently, to support individual assessments and progression in specific subject areas building on international best practice. The problems surrounding national examinations arising from the pandemic have exposed underlying issues with established practice.

It is essential that the current preference and insistence for summative assessment, testing and terminal examinations is replaced by a variety of different assessments in all sectors to reflect the holistic learner. Coursework needs to return in some subjects alongside controlled assessment and speaking and listening (Viva Voce) and online assessments to reflect the variety of ways in which the world of work and Higher Institutions assess learners. These assessments can be rigorously standardised, moderated and monitored in a professional and supportive way. Teachers would be trained in this approach. An examination option allowing students to present up to two 'independent study' or 'locally determined study' options' is to be introduced - in line with best practice in teaching and learning which accommodates the personal interests of learners and reflective of assessment methodologies post-18.

There is a need for a greater role for internal assessment in determining qualifications that better match the knowledge and skills demanded by wider social and economic change. The capacity to apply learning creatively in unfamiliar contexts is increasingly the kind of high-value skill demanded by the workplace of the future. Traditional examinations are not capable of making such assessments on their own.

**Qualifications** would be overhauled to provide parity of academic, technical and creative subjects and qualifications and (within this) opportunities for personalised pathways for learners with different aptitudes and skill sets should be established. The Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) will be re-established with an educational technology specialist division. Make the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) entirely independent of government (as with the Bank of England) to end political interference with its regulatory role.

**Technology and equity:** A Commission could be established to review the lessons learnt from the shift to online teaching due to Covid. It is known that learners benefit from having materials available before and after lessons. To this end, a National Virtual School and FE college could be established with existing providers to collate the highest quality online learning approaches and make available catch up learning for all (See the [Australian virtual FE college](#) and the [Australian virtual schools model](#)). As with the early UK Open University model, materials and lessons would be open but accreditation would be paid for, scholarships for certain categories of student would be available.

**Accountability structures and processes directly affect the curriculum, pedagogy and use of technology (see the Ofsted section) learners and families:**

To avoid unintended consequences from policies, checks would be made to ensure accountability structures:

- Do not inadvertently mean some schools do not want to offer places to low income families, as now.
- Do not inadvertently mean some schools do not want to offer places to SEND students, as now.
- Do not force SEND students into a curriculum that is inappropriate, as now.
- Do not lead to teacher resignations and suicides, as now.

#### *References/Bibliography*

Australian virtual FE college: <https://www.tafensw.edu.au/digital>

Australian virtual schools mode: <https://www.australian-children.com/school-of-the-air>

CBI (Confederation of British Industries). (2019). *Getting young people' work ready: Our vision for how education should prepare young people for the modern world.*  
[https://www.cbi.org.uk/media/2960/cbi\\_work-readiness.pdf](https://www.cbi.org.uk/media/2960/cbi_work-readiness.pdf)

EPPI systematic research and gap analysis maps:

<http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/cms/Projects/DepartmentofHealthandSocialCare/Publishedreviews/COVID-19Liv>



[ingsystematicmapoftheevidence/tabid/3765/Default.aspx](#)

Harris, C. (2021). Beyond a subject transmission model for the English secondary curriculum- the role of 'Rich Tasks' an interdisciplinary and digital approach to learning post COVID-19. *Media and Education Journal*. Pixel-Bit. Spain

History Workshop. (2012). *CSE Mode 3: The Rise and Fall of the GCSE: A Class History*:  
(<https://www.historyworkshop.org.uk/the-rise-and-fall-of-the-gcse-a-class-history/>) and  
<https://www.stem.org.uk/elibrary/resource/27073>

International baccalaureate Diploma programme:  
<https://www.ibo.org/programmes/diploma-programme/curriculum/>

MESHGuide research summaries: <http://meshagain.meshguides.org/articles/>

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) Pathways: <https://pathways.nice.org.uk>

Personal, Learning and Thinking Skills (PLTS) :  
<https://www.gatewayqualifications.org.uk/qualification-area/personal-social-development/personal-learning-thinking/>

OECD. (2019). *Pisa 2021 Creative Thinking Framework*.  
<https://www.oecd.org/pisa/publications/PISA-2021-creative-thinking-framework.pdf>

Rich tasks: Queensland, Australia, "Rich Tasks" Assessment Program:  
<https://www.fairtest.org/queensland-australia-rich-tasks-assessment-program>. See also Scotland's GlowConnect: <https://glowconnect.org.uk>

Social Mobility Commission's Long Shadow of Deprivation longitudinal study

## **10b Celebrating the Talents of Youth**

*Press statement:* To celebrate young people's performance, working with partners from business, the media and professional and subject associations, we will launch a *Celebration of Youth Festival programme* with National Challenges across subject disciplines. These opportunities for young people through local, regional and national competitions, will develop and showcase young people's many talents. The achievements of our children and youth are rarely recognised in the press. In fact young people are brilliant and achieve a great deal that is to be celebrated. We will value their achievements and open doors for them to develop and showcase their talents so that they believe in their ability to contribute to the development of the society we live in.

We see such festivals becoming part of our national life in the way that sporting events are so much a part of life for many young and older people and the National Eisteddfod programme is part of Welsh

life.

*Priority:* Establish an inclusive but diverse and comprehensive annual Youth Festival programme.

*Ways of achieving this priority:* Bring together a coherent programme of National Challenges across the disciplines by working together with local authorities, businesses and existing organisations sponsoring youth challenges. Such organisations include the Council for Subject Associations (representing 30 subject associations), Rotary, English Speaking Union, sporting associations, Guiding, Scouting, Woodcraft Folk, Youth Hostels Association, Forest Schools, local authority youth initiatives.

*Funding:* The above organisations already have models for funding their national challenges many of which use volunteers and community members. Additional costs incurred by creating a national coordinating role and filling gaps in provision could be paid for through government grant, public fundraising or through savings made by introducing national pay scales for staff. Savings could be made by reining in Multi-academy Trust (MAT) chief executive pay which in some cases is ten times a teacher's salary. (Local Authority Directors of Education were typically on 2.5 times the basic teaching salary and they were responsible for many more schools). These funds after all are intended to be used to educate youth rather than line individual pockets. Excessive salaries take public funds away from children and remove funding which could pay for skilled jobs.

*References:* Examples of existing provision can be seen through the following links:

- Council for Subject Associations: <https://www.subjectassociations.org.uk/competitions-and-awards/>
- Rotary: <https://www.rotarygbi.org/projects/young-people/>
- English Speaking Union: <https://www.esu.org/programmes/>

### **10c Climate change and sustainable living: Empowering CYP to tackle big environmental issues**

*Press statement:* Environmental concerns like climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution and loss of green spaces are some of biggest issues facing humanity today. Labour education policy can respond to climate change, biodiversity collapse, and the need to protect our natural world. Today's learners are tomorrow's leaders and legislators. They are the future workers in cleaner and greener industries. They are also the future custodians of this planet.

*Priority:* Policy in this area should reflect our view, that education has a role to play in tackling the anxiety about climate change which affects so many youngsters. In a November 2020 report, the Royal College of Psychiatrists refers to this as 'Eco Distress'.

*Ways of achieving this priority:*

How to counter this anxiety? Education can give our young people the tools to tackle issues like climate change, make them feel empowered, and help them make a genuine difference to their world.

It can also help foster a closer bond between CYP and the natural world.

Here are some proposals:

- Review curriculum content across the full range of subjects, to ensure coverage of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- The introduction of new initiatives- such as the proposed GCSE in Natural History- could be considered as part of this process (OCR, 2020).
- Because the curriculum can only deliver so much, there is scope for Labour education policy to promote extracurricular opportunities. Such opportunities can be aimed at giving all pupils the chance to equip themselves with the personal understanding, skills and confidence to tackle climate change, both individually and collectively. They should have the chance to participate in climate-change focused activities, such as a 'Carbon Zero Schools' challenge to reduce the carbon footprint of each and every school and school community. The National Youth Festivals proposed in Section 10b (and the existing Council for Subject Associations, Rotary and English Speaking Union initiatives) are also means of involving youngsters in climate-focused creative projects.

*References:*

Royal College of Psychiatrists. (2020). *The climate crisis is taking a toll on the mental health of children and young people.*

<https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/news-and-features/latest-news/detail/2020/11/20/the-climate-crisis-is-taking-a-toll-on-the-mental-health-of-children-and-young-people>

OCR. (2020). *Natural History GCSE.* <https://teach.ocr.org.uk/naturalhistory>

The debate about covering environmental issues in the curriculum can get as testy as the debate about issues like climate change in society as a whole. The following brief report from the organisation Full Fact is a good place to start, in terms of looking at where we are- and how policy could be used to steer a middle course:

<https://fullfact.org/education/climate-change-school-curriculum/>

## 10d ITE and CPD

*Press statement:* Our vision is for our teacher education and training and professional development systems to be of the highest standard underpinned by research and using modern technologies to give teachers access to the latest knowledge so their lessons are up to date.

We have had one of the best creative education systems in the world, but this has been undermined by the anti-expert philosophy heralded by the current administration. Their closing down of Labour's world-leading online resource banks for teachers - a modern day version of burning libraries - destroyed our CPD system and left teachers and parents without the online supportive materials available in other countries at the time of Covid.

We will raise standards for initial and continuing teacher education through allowing our teachers and educators to be empowered to do their job with the help of research-informed professional support and career development.

### *Priorities:*

- 1) Teacher Qualifications: Ensure all our teachers have teaching qualifications that are internationally recognised.
- 2) Provide national coordination of CPD by working with CPD providers to ensure the availability of a comprehensive CPD programme accessible at times to suit teachers.
- 3) Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and CPD: Ensure CPD is available to all teachers at the point of need and at times that they are available, through adopting innovative CPD models supported by technologies and the full range of media.

*Ways of achieving these priorities:* We see two solutions - parity with standards (international teacher standards) and parity with services in health by having an online evidence-based practice resources the equivalent of medicine's NICE Pathways, for education.

### **Parity with international standards of qualifications:**

- Every teacher in a state school should have an internationally recognised qualification. Initial Teacher Education qualifications and the routes to qualification are currently in chaos, with some qualifications such as the English Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) not recognised internationally as being of an acceptable standard. Those training are often not aware their qualifications are not of an internationally acceptable standard.
- Conservative policy has been to encourage the appointment of unqualified teachers. See for example this quotation by Jones (2014) "Though the Labour government had made incremental salary progression conditional upon successful passage through a threshold assessment, it had left intact the national pay structure, which set out a pattern of incremental progression that all teachers would follow. Gove regarded this structure as a collectivist relic. He proposed that individual school managements should be able to set

differential pay levels for each teacher, and that, in the case of some categories of schools, should be able to recruit unqualified teachers (Stevenson 2013).”

- Parents are shocked to find that schools have been encouraged to employ unqualified teachers and have no way of knowing if those teaching their children are qualified teachers. National Audit Office reports (NAO op. cit.) identify concerns over the lack of standards required of academies. Teachers have immense power in the formation of the child: they work with a child’s mind and can inspire children but also can suppress their aspiration and belief in themselves. Their qualifications should not be hidden. Parents should be able to find out the qualifications of those teaching their children. A public national register of teachers and their qualifications should be established as for health and care professionals.

**Parity with services in health** by having an online evidence-based practice resources the equivalent of NICE Pathways, for education.

- **Harnessing technologies** to ensure all teachers and parents can access the latest research and Ofsted knowledge that is up-to-date. The evidence-base for teaching should be a valuable national asset, as has been achieved with the Labour flagship initiatives for medicine: the NHS websites, NICE and the NICE Pathways. Gove/Cummings/Gibb destroyed education’s equivalents in their ‘bonfire of the quangos’. These were world-leading initiatives of the Labour government (see References for links). Education needs something like these high quality knowledge banks and resources to be reinstated - they are currently on the National Archives. The online Oak Academy set up in a hurry by the Conservative Government in 2020 (without competitive tender) is not yet of the professional standard of Labour’s initiatives. This did not appear to build on existing government investments or the knowledge of many specialist expert groups e.g. in STEM for example. Government funded initiatives are expected by users to be at industry standard not amateurish. There are experts in the UK who know how to produce high quality online teaching materials and many organisations with high quality materials - curation, collation and gap analysis is needed so teachers/parents/learners can find them. The MESHGuides initiative for education shows what can be done in education to create a NICE Pathways.equivalent. The MESHGuides knowledge pathways initiative was set up by educators to continue the experimentation in innovative online knowledge repositories for teachers funded under Labour.
- **We need a system of CPD that is to be career-long, accredited and points-based.** CPD needs to be seen as an investment and funded. This could solve teachers' high attrition rate. It would be more cost effective to invest in CPD and retain teachers. A possible Labour line to saving money. Provision of accredited professional development available to all teachers, with expected CPD point registration linked with a five year qualifications revalidation cycle as for doctors and offering lifelong learning across teachers’ professional career.
- **The role of Ofsted** should be to collate, curate and disseminate best practices they are identifying through their national work. These need to be stored and made accessible to all teachers, as a knowledge-base that is held in a repository and accessed through a portal giving one coherent place. Ofsted have previously produced valuable reports providing a national review of effective subject specific practices.
- **Make teaching a Master’s level profession** (as for some countries similar to the UK). How to sell it: your child deserves an excellent teacher workforce that is empowered and educated to the highest standards. This professionalisation process allows Labour Ministers to embed

long-term curriculum change and changes in teaching practice, and needs to be seen as part of the accountability agenda.

*References/Bibliography for Labour's legacy of online resources*

Teacher Training Resource Bank (TTRB):

<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20101021152907/http://www.ttrb.ac.uk/>

And TTRB associated sites: behaviour, diversity, SEND, and all major subject areas -

<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20101012095315/http://www.ttrb.ac.uk//links.aspx>

Multiverse diversity scenarios to support teachers

<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20101007141354/http://www.multiverse.ac.uk/ViewArticle2.aspx?ContentId=15683>

BECTA <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110130161923/http://www.becta.org.uk/> also held by the UCL IOE Library

Teachers TV - We suggest you contact Andrew Bethell who was involved and who could locate these resources. We can provide contact details.

The Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) repository is held by a colleague at the Paul Hamlyn Foundation. We can provide contact details.

Jones, K. (2014). *Conservatism and educational crisis: the case of England*. *Education Inquiry*, 5:1, 24046, DOI: 10.3402/edui.v5.24046.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.3402/edui.v5.24046>

## CROSS-PHASE PROPOSALS

### 11. Wellbeing: Supporting the whole child, school and community

*Press statement:* We will change the education system to help pupils' wellbeing and to increase their mental health. In this way we will make schools happier places with less stress and anxiety.

UNICEF's 2020 'Worlds of Influence' Report noted that in the UK over 1 in 3 (36%) 15-year olds rated their mental wellbeing as poor, more than 1 in 3 (37%) children lacked basic literacy and numeracy skills and 31% of children in the UK are now obese or overweight. The link between mental ill-health and poor educational outcomes is well evidenced. There is also a developing body of research identifying the negative impact of school processes on the mental health of education professionals. It is therefore important for education policy to take into account the wellbeing of pupils and teachers, this will be even more vital due to the impact of the responses to Covid-19.

*Priority:* The impact on pupil wellbeing is to be considered in the development of any policies and practices.

*Ways of achieving this priority:*

- Work with organisations with experiences and commitment in this area and existing programmes such as the Barnardo's Life Skills Programme to complement and extend existing practices.
- Promoting life skills is as important as academic success and include how to develop these in school via teacher education and regular CPD.
- Teachers provided with the appropriate training and support can play a part in helping their students to cope with some of these pressures. But it is also acknowledged that schools need to work in greater collaboration with local mental health services and charities. Mental ill-health is a systemic issue that requires multiple parties to be engaged. Mental health professionals are best placed to provide the appropriate highly skilled support children will need.
- Re-organise the curriculum to encourage social and emotional development (see curriculum). High-stakes testing at every stage of formal education makes little educational sense and the amount of formal testing needs to be reduced. Schools should be encouraged to place a high value on positive relationships, and focus on promoting a nurturing environment where pupils can experience a sense of connectedness and belonging between each other and the natural world.
- Research has shown that people who are emotionally literate and kind to people are more likely to be happy and content with their lives (81 per cent), and to earn more (Ferrari and Freeman 2017). In contrast, of those people who described themselves as aggressive, only 10 per cent said they were happy.
- The provision of adequate resources at home and school will alleviate anxiety that can lead to mental ill-health. There needs to be a clear strategy to ensure that all children have access to digital resources, including reliable high-speed internet services, well resourced local libraries,

museums and other cultural resources.

- Have a clear strategy to end childhood food poverty and to ensure children are able to afford to dress appropriately for school.

*References/Further Reading:* There are many organisations with research and programmes in this area. A simple search of the [Charities Commission](#) website is recommended to identify the organisations which it is relevant to include in policy discussions and development. To find researchers in the area a search of the [Research Excellence Framework database](#) will show the leading research institutes and researchers. Recent PhD research which is usually close to practice and addressing issues of concern to practitioners can be found on the various theses databases hosted in different countries. The UK PhD thesis database - [Ethos](#) - is managed by the British Library.

## 12. Ofsted's future purpose, role, and identity

*Press statement:* We need an inspection service that will enable schools to continually improve. Research indicates that educationalists improve more when they work in [mentoring, coaching and supervision situations with peers and experts](#).

Ofsted currently is not performing adequately as government bodies are saying:

*Ofsted does not know whether its school inspections are having the intended impact: to raise the standards of education and improve the quality of children's and young people's lives. It has not had clear performance indicators or targets to track progress towards these high-level aims. Its performance measures have instead focused mainly on activity and processes.* (NAO, 2018, p.42)

*The National Audit Office found that Ofsted did not have evidence that its inspections were raising standards of education provided to children and young people. Until Ofsted is better able to assess its impact, it is difficult for the NAO to be satisfied that Ofsted provides value for money to the taxpayer.* (Public Accounts Committee, 2018)

These judgements speak for themselves. Ofsted as currently constituted and run has outlived its purpose. Rather than continue as just an 'accountability measure', the time has come for Ofsted to develop its role and remit, offering proper support and structured help for schools. In this way it can become the motor for further improvement. A reimagined Ofsted or its successor should be more like a 'critical friend' rather than simply 'judge and jury'. Indeed, this judge and jury model has not led to school improvement. Those judging schools need to be able to propose remedies, drawn on best practices from around the country and around the world. In short, our inspectors need to be our most knowledgeable educators.

*Priority:* Develop an accountability system coupled with a knowledgeable and experienced support service which leads to school improvement unlike the current Ofsted system.



*Ways of achieving the priority:* Ofsted, in the long term should be replaced with a multi-dimensional approach that is supportive and will reduce the anxiety of the present high stakes system. The system could work with peers and inspectors in critical co-mentoring and will be supportive and collegiate so provoke less anxiety than the top down high stakes system at present and be alive to recent research and help teachers understand it. (Note: teacher suicides are related to the current Ofsted system and the impact of this on children should be considered).

**Ideas for revising Ofsted'S PURPOSE:**

- Ensure it continues to maintain standards generally, but put equal emphasis on a new school support and development role. Knowledge sharing would be central to this. This can be done through sharing national reports of excellent practice; webinars on specialist areas of knowledge to support improvement; and engagement with teacher training organisations so that initial and continuing training is of the highest standard.
- Develop dependable measures to reassure the government and the public that Ofsted helps schools to improve, and that it delivers value for money.
- Change the focus away from simply praising and extolling excellence based on educational performance data, and shift it to more holistic judgements of effectiveness and a wider range of assessment criteria. For example, Ofsted could reward and praise schools for improving pupil wellbeing and the work it does with the most vulnerable e.g. SEND / looked after children.

**Ideas for revising Ofsted's REMIT AND ROLE:**

To achieve this new and improved function for Ofsted, a national specialist training programme for inspectors will need to be established, which would also be open to headteachers and middle managers. There will be a strong focus on subject knowledge expertise so that our knowledge about how to teach complex subject concepts to young people becomes world leading. Labour created the National College for School Leadership under the previous administration which was dismantled. The proposed new National Education Leadership scheme would be a virtual university college drawing on learning sciences research, including in specialist subjects, from around the world.

In addition, we advocate the following measures:

- Consider splitting Ofsted into three clear specialist branches: An office for schools, an office for nurseries and early years providers, and one for FE and the tertiary sector.
- Consider making Ofsted entirely independent of government (as with the Bank of England) to end political interference with regulatory roles
- Reconsider the purpose of the Ofsted grading system. Consider replacement or abolition.

**Ideas on Ofsted's future identity:**

- Consign the name to history and rebrand the organisation, for it is a damaged and sullied brand. Ofsted has of course been linked throughout its history with excess teacher workload, stress and most tragically teacher suicide. Consider a name that is fresh and positive, such as the "Support for Schools Office". Alternatively, something that connotes respect and a sense of

genuine integrity would work well. For example, the National Education Union (NEU) suggests reverting back to the Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) name.

- Change the tone and language used by- and about- Ofsted, using terms that reflect positivity, progress, co-working, and a growth mindset. The current 'punishment and reward' rhetoric is divisive, and reflects a simplistic, anti-teacher, world view.

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### **13. Education providers, the wider public interest, and the role of schools in meeting communities' needs**

*Press statement:* If the current fractured system of school management is meant to be the answer, then what on earth was the original question?

There has been a dilution of stakeholder involvement in the community, often resulting in schools being governed by MAT Executives that are geographically very remote. In addition there is widespread evidence of forced “academisation” against the wishes of the local stakeholder community. This process has been accompanied by a lack of control over the deployment of resources and excessively inflated salaries for leadership roles in MATs. These issues should be investigated as part of an evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the current system.

*Priority:* The differences between how different school types are organised, funded, and governed should be resolved. A clear and simple system, grounded in robust accountability processes, should be the goal. Above all, the focus needs to be brought back to individual learners, equity, the public interest and a focus on what communities really need. A major review of the current system is a priority.

*Ways of achieving this priority:* In the interim Trusts should be required to actively engage with approaches and directives that align them in the legal and ethical heart of improving local provision, by sharing good practice and working proactively with other schools within the sector.

21st century schools should be at the heart of their communities, with families, professionals and communities working together, to create a culture of lifelong learning, improved outcomes, healthy communities, and person-centred services. Schools could become ‘hubs’ again, providing an integrated ‘suite’ of services: academic learning, after school and community clubs, and health and social services. Delivering wider provision for CYP in school would also enable easier access to services such as health services, as well as more specialist support (e.g. for SEND and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)). Lifelong learning and social opportunities could also be offered to the wider community by using existing school facilities. However, it is important that legislation avoids problems encountered in the past. For example, there were difficulties implementing the ‘Education Action Zones’ of the early 2000s because Health and Education budgets are separate things.

Schools have a central role supporting social cohesion, in building community spirit, in providing a community hub, and so must be governed and managed by the local community and enabled to respond to community needs. The recent COVID-19 crisis showed the lack of capacity of the current fragmented school system to contribute a locally coherent response. The current broken system meant there was no local overview of needs for children, there was no locally coherent programme to provide. For example, to connect up and maintain computers, provide free school meals, to monitor engagement of vulnerable children. There was a lack of efficient use of resources to continue support for children of key workers alone, to provide online lessons, to lead on co-ordinated use of community facilities. There was no local co-ordination of adult volunteers in the community to support continuity

of learning and stimulating extension activities which could have been provided in parks and theatres by leisure and theatre staff on furlough as well as retired teachers.

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#### **14. A coherent education system**

*Press statement:* The Covid-19 pandemic is showing up the disadvantages of not grouping local schools together locally, and not having knowledgeable national leadership coupled with local coordination on SEND, curriculum, assessment, teacher professional development and technology support issues. Schools, teachers and pupils - particularly those with special needs - were isolated because local support structures were largely dismantled to accommodate the Academy ideology. Our children have been let down by the ideological changes schools and communities have been subject to. Countries we would expect to benchmark ourselves against have strong leadership in these areas and well established structures to support schools, teachers and children through challenging times.

*Priority:* To establish what is working well and what needs to be changed to improve the educational outcomes of young people.

*Ways of achieving this priority:*

Proposals for the whole education system to ensure coherence and continuity:

- For teachers, a full return to a national pay scheme and agreed terms and conditions across all schools, regardless of who runs them. In particular we require a return to one- year contracts, because 'parts of year contracts' are increasingly used. These can have serious implications for Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) (soon to be referred to as ECT- Early Career teachers) in gaining QTS.
- Ensure that quality assurance and accountability systems in LAs and MATs are transparent and effective across all educational institutions.

- Any study and evaluation of the current system needs to review whether having this dual LA-MATs system is financially sustainable going forward and provides best outcomes for communities, families and learners.
- For the sake of clarity, transparency and accountability, there is an argument for giving responsibility over key areas like school admissions, SEND, safeguarding, and funding to a single body in any given local area. Local Authorities are best placed to do this, but this responsibility must go hand in hand with consistent support and scrutiny, to make sure that best practice is shared and adhered to across the nation.
- Ensure all schools have a statutory requirement to develop and take part in regional and national CPD, and to regularly share good practice with each other in a variety of forums.

Addressing particular concerns over MATs:

The Secretary of State for Education should commission an independent evaluation of the academies programme and the associated impacts of the ‘academisation’ process.

This evaluation should focus on all levels of the system and particularly on the following areas:

- The planning of public education as a whole due to the fragmented nature of the system at the local, regional and national level
- Equitable access to high quality education for all due to ‘gaming’ the system and ‘off-rolling’
- Processes of governance in schools including local democratic accountability
- Forced ‘academisation’ against the wishes of the local stakeholder community. Clarity is needed, over the role of Ofsted in such cases and about the role of Regional Schools Commissioners offices: How can we make the latter truly accountable to local stakeholders.
- Control over resources and salary levels for leadership roles in academies and MATS.
- The breadth of the school curriculum at both primary and secondary level as a result of the emphasis given to an ill-defined so called ‘knowledge-rich’ or ‘knowledge-based’ curriculum. There is widespread concern that the creative arts subjects are being squeezed out.

*References for further reading and research on the ‘fractured’ LA-MATs landscape:*

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