

Submission from South East Cornwall CLP to Labour's National Policy Forum – Towards a National Education Service

We welcome:

1. The Labour Party's 2017 manifesto commitment to create a National Education Service; and
2. The Charter for a National Education Service Launched at Labour Conference 2017.

We welcome the Party's commitment to being involved in developing the ideas and strategies needed for a NES, and to working to generate democratic public debate engaging parents and local communities in a broad and deep consultation.

We recognise that:

- i. Essential investment made by previous Labour governments in our schools has been reversed under the Coalition and Conservative governments and that massive real term funding cuts to education are damaging the ability of schools to deliver effective education.
- ii. Major reforms to education in the last 20 years – the academies programme, the rise of “free schools”, and the use of the Private Finance Initiative to build schools – have been driven by a free market ideology and have led to a fragmented, semi-privatised and unaccountable system.
- iii. There is no evidence that academies outperform local authority maintained schools; many are now owned by chains, with a high proportion of funding lost to administration and financial mismanagement; and are not accountable to the communities they serve.
- iv. Continual testing of pupils from a very young age, a highly prescriptive national curriculum and competitive league tables together place enormous stress on pupils and teachers, and are a key cause of the present crisis in teacher recruitment and retention.
- v. Transforming this legacy into a modern comprehensive, inclusive, progressive and democratic system will require a sustained legislative programme and huge financial commitment.

Further to the aims set out in the NES Charter, we believe that a National Education Service should:

- I. Ensure a comprehensive education service that is fully funded through taxation and develop a funding formula that ensures extra resources are available where the need is greatest. Schools and colleges must receive sufficient funding, both to reflect basic and additional needs and local circumstances;
- II. Be based on democratic control of public education, at national, local and school level, including the accountability of all schools to the local authority in which they are situated, by developing models of governance and accountability that encourage collaboration between schools, parents and local communities; are based around professional dialogue; and are supportive, developmental, and based on evidence of best practice.
- III. Give teachers and other education professionals substantial input into setting the curriculum.

- IV. Rather than a prescriptive curriculum, there should be a set of over-arching principles to guide curriculum development, based on: a holistic approach to education that seeks to develop emotional and practical skills as well as academic excellence, with particular reference to children with special needs; recognition of all subjects across the curriculum and the need to foster creativity in children as central to educational and personal development; an appreciation of different cultures and languages around the world, and a recognition of the contributions of different cultures to our society; a critical understanding of UK and world history that will enable an appreciation of the importance of human rights and the suffering that has been caused by human wrongs;
- V. Establish examination and monitoring processes that support learning and development and minimise standardised testing;
- VI. Provide a national framework for pay and conditions and ensure free collective bargaining with recognised trade unions;
- VII. Aim to develop the skills and qualifications of all education workers, through a commitment to genuine lifelong learning; and
- VIII. Promote education policies that are integrated with strategies aimed at tackling inequality and poverty.

**South East Cornwall CLP
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