

Conservative

- **Give parents the power to save local schools** threatened by closure, allowing communities the chance to take over and run good small schools.
- Establish **Technical Academies** across England, starting in at least twelve cities which will be focussed on vocational and technical education.
- Introduce the **National Citizen Service**. The initial flagship project will provide a programme for 16 year olds to give them a chance to develop the skills needed to be active and responsible citizens, mix with people from different backgrounds, and start getting involved in their communities. Take Sure Start back to its original purpose of early intervention, increase its focus on the neediest families, and better involve organisations with a track record in supporting families.
- Bring all funding for **early intervention and parenting support into one budget**, to be overseen by a single, newly-created Early Years Support Team.
- A ‘community right to buy’ scheme will give local people the power to protect any community assets that are threatened with closure.
- Give people a ‘right to bid’ to run any community service instead of the state.
- Give local councils a ‘general power of competence’, so that they have explicit authority to do what is necessary to improve their communities.
- End ring-fencing so that funding can be spent on local priorities.
- End the bureaucratic inspection regime that stops councils focusing on residents’ main concerns.

Labour

- **Spending increased** on frontline Sure Start and free childcare, schools and 16-19 learning.
- A choice of good schools in every area – and, where parents are not satisfied – the **power to bring in new school leadership teams**, through mergers and takeovers, with up to 1,000 secondary schools part of an accredited schools group by 2015.
- **Every young person guaranteed education or training until 18**, with 75 per cent going on to higher education, or completing an advanced apprenticeship or technician level training, by the age of 30.
- **Pioneer mutual federations** running groups of local Children’s Centres in the community interest.
- **New cooperative trust schools** where parents, teachers and the local community come together to help govern their local school.
- Introduce a **local pupil premium** to guarantee that extra funding to take account of deprivation follows the pupil. Barriers to social mobility will be tackled by giving disadvantaged families free access to broadband to support their child’s learning.
- **Extending the provision of free school meals** so that an additional half a million primary school children in families on low incomes will benefit from healthy and nutritious food, and trialing free school meals for all primary school children in pilot areas test the case for universal free school meals.
- **Vetting and Barring system** will protect children without being unduly burdensome or interfering in private family arrangements. Social work training will be radically overhauled, and we will establish a National College of Social Work.
- **Publish detailed Serious Case Review summaries** that explain the facts, but keep full reports out of the public domain in order to protect children’s identities.
- Ring-fenced budgets, central targets and indicators will be cut back.
- Petitioning powers for local residents to demand action, and extending neighbourhood agreements where citizens set out the standards of services they expect locally.

Liberal Democrat

- Local authorities will not run schools, but will have a **central strategic role**, including responsibility for oversight of school performance and fair admissions. They will be expected to intervene where school leadership or performance is weak.
- Ensure a level playing field for admissions and funding and **replace Academies with ‘Sponsor-Managed Schools’**. These schools will be commissioned by and accountable to local authorities, and would allow other appropriate providers, such as educational charities and parent groups, to be involved in delivering state-funded education.
- Setting aside extra money for schools who want to **improve the energy efficiency of their buildings**. They will pay back the loan over time from energy savings, creating a rolling fund to help insulate every public building.
- Guarantee **Special Educational Needs (SEN) diagnostic assessments** for all five-year-olds, improve SEN provision and improve SEN training for teachers.
- Establish a **fully independent Educational Standards Authority (ESA)** with real powers to stand up to ministers and restore confidence in standards. The ESA would oversee the examinations system, the systems of school inspection and accountability, and the detail of the curriculum. It would replace the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency and the Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator (OFQUAL), and include OFSTED, the schools inspectorate.
- Axe the National Curriculum, and replace it with a slimmed down **‘Minimum Curriculum Entitlement’**

Conservative Manifesto

- We will give all head teachers the power to pay good teachers more.
- We will expand Teach First and introduce two new programmes – Teach Now, for people looking to change career, and Troops to Teachers, for ex-service personnel – to get experienced, high-quality people into the profession.
- We will make it easier for teachers to deal with violent incidents and remove disruptive pupils or items from the classroom. We believe heads are best placed to improve behaviour, which is why we will stop them being overruled by bureaucrats on exclusions.
- To raise the status of teaching and toughen school discipline further, we will:
 - raise the entry requirement for taxpayer funded primary school teacher training;
 - expect new graduates to have at least a 2:2 in their degree in order to qualify for state-funded training;
 - pay the student loan repayments for top Maths and Science graduates for as long as they remain teachers, by redirecting some of the current teacher training budget;
 - give teachers the strongest possible protection from false accusations;
 - reinforce powers of discipline by strengthening home-school behaviour contracts.
- Every child who is capable of reading should be doing so after two years in primary school. To make this happen, we will promote the teaching of systematic synthetic phonics and ensure that teachers are properly trained to teach using this method. To provide parents with the reassurance they need that their child is making progress, we will establish a simple reading test at the age of six.
- We will reform the National Curriculum so that it is more challenging and based on evidence about what knowledge can be mastered by children at different ages. We will ensure that the primary curriculum is organised around subjects like Maths, Science and History. We will encourage setting so those who are struggling get extra help and the most able are stretched.
- We will ensure that our exam system is measured against the most rigorous systems in the world. We will keep Key Stage 2 tests and league tables. We will reform them to make them more rigorous. We will make other exams more robust by giving universities and academics more say over their form and content. We want to develop proper vocational and technical education that engages young people and meets the needs of modern business. So we will establish Technical Academies across England, starting in at least twelve cities.
- People expect to be able to make choices about the services they use, based on robust information about the quality on offer. So a Conservative government will reform school league tables so that schools can demonstrate they are stretching the most able and raising the attainment of the less able.
- To improve school standards further, we will:
 - allow all state schools the freedom to offer the same high quality international exams that private schools offer – including giving every pupil the chance to study separate sciences at GCSE;
 - create 20,000 additional young apprenticeships;
 - allow schools and colleges to offer workplace training;
 - publish all performance data currently kept secret by the Department for Children, Schools and Families; and,
 - establish a free online database of exam papers and marking schemes.
- Drawing on the experience of the Swedish school reforms and the charter school movement in the United States, we will break down barriers to entry so that any good education provider can set up a new Academy school. Our schools revolution will create a new generation of good small schools with smaller class sizes and high standards of discipline.
- Our school reform programme is a major part of our anti-poverty strategy, which is why our first task will be to establish new Academy schools in the most deprived areas of the country. They will be beacons of excellence in areas where school standards are unacceptably low.
- We want every child to benefit from our reforms. So all existing schools will have the chance to achieve Academy status, with 'outstanding' schools pre-approved, and we will extend the Academy programme to primary schools.
- Education's real power lies in its ability to transform life chances, but we can't go on giving the poorest children the worst education. That is why we will introduce a pupil premium – extra funding for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- The most vulnerable children deserve the very highest quality of care, so we will call a moratorium on the ideologically-driven closure of special schools. We will end the bias towards the inclusion of children with special needs in mainstream schools.
- People have been far too ready to excuse failure in schools. We will ensure that the schools inspectorate Ofsted adopts a more rigorous and targeted inspection regime, reporting on performance only in the core areas related to teaching and learning. And any school that is in special measures for more than a year will be taken over immediately by a successful Academy provider. To give parents better access to a good school, we will:
 - give parents the power to save local schools threatened by closure, allowing communities the chance to take over and run good small schools;
 - make sure Academies have the freedoms that helped to make them so successful in the first place;

- ensure failing schools are inspected more often – with the best schools visited less frequently.

Labour Manifesto

- Frontline spending on Sure Start, childcare, schools and 16-19 learning will be increased, safeguarding our priorities such as an additional 41,000 teachers and 120,000 teaching assistants. But funding will not rise as fast as in recent years, making tough choices necessary to focus resources on the front line, with £950m saved through collaboration and efficiency in back office functions and procurement and £500m from quangos and central budgets.
- The range and reach of innovative school providers will increase, spreading excellence to all schools. We will strive to get the best people into teaching and give parents new rights to secure good schooling for their children. Participation in post-school learning will expand, with more and better apprenticeships, improved vocational education, and wider access to higher education.
- Every parent wants their child to attend an excellent school – with the best possible teaching and facilities. So for pupils and parents we will set out in law guarantees of the excellent education and personal support they can expect.
- No school can be better than the quality of its teachers. We have the best generation of teachers ever, supported by teaching assistants and the wider workforce. But we must continue to get the very best people into teaching, from the most committed graduates to the highest calibre career switchers. Teach First will be extended to attract more of the best graduates into teaching, including teaching in primary schools.
- We have invested heavily in the professionalism and expertise of the workforce, and will build on this success with a new right for every teacher to continuous professional development; in return they will have to demonstrate high standards of teaching to maintain their licence to practise. We will promote new Teacher Training Academies and £10,000 ‘golden handcuffs’ to attract the best teachers into the most challenging schools.
- While the number of lowperforming schools has decreased dramatically, we cannot tolerate any coasting or persistently poor schools. Over the last decade, we have developed a cadre of world-class head teachers, radically opened up our school system to new providers, and worked with local authorities and school governing bodies to drive up standards.
- Our task now is to devolve more power and responsibility to strong school leaders and to spread excellence, with up to 1,000 schools, through mergers and take-overs, part of an accredited school group by 2015 – a new generation of not-for-profit chains of schools with a proven track record. These will include excellent school leaders from the maintained sector, universities, colleges, faith schools, academy chains and independent schools.
- We now have 200 academies and over 50 National Challenge Trusts, with another 200 academies in the pipeline. And we are pioneering new cooperative trust schools where parents, teachers and the local community come together to help govern their local school.
- Where parents are dissatisfied with the choice of secondary schools in an area, local authorities will be required to act, securing take-overs of poor schools, the expansion of good schools, or in some cases, entirely new provision. Where parents at an individual school want change, they will be able to trigger a ballot on whether to bring in a new leadership team from a proven and trusted accredited provider.
- School Report Cards will give every parent clear information on standards, levels of parental satisfaction and behaviour and bullying. They will provide information on the progress being made by all pupils, not just by some. We will consult on giving every school an overall grade for its performance.
- We reject a return to the 11-plus or a free-for-all admission system. Our commitment to fair admissions is essential to liberating the potential of every child. Ensuring all pupils make progress also requires a fair funding system, so we will introduce a local pupil premium to guarantee that extra funding to take account of deprivation follows the pupil. Barriers to social mobility will be tackled by giving disadvantaged families free access to broadband to support their child's learning. All parents will be guaranteed online information about their child's progress and behaviour.
- We have high expectations for children with special educational needs and schools will be held to account for how well they meet the needs of these pupils. We are expanding the number of specialist dyslexia teachers and improving teacher training for children with autism. The statementing process will be improved to give more support to parents, and the supply of teachers with the specialist skills needed to teach pupils with severe learning disabilities in special schools will be increased.
- Our primary curriculum reforms will create more flexibility for teachers to offer a broad, challenging and engaging education, with opportunities to play sport, and to take part in arts, culture and music, including the chance to learn a musical instrument. As part of these reforms, all primary schools will teach a modern foreign language. We will create a specialist Mandarin teacher training qualification, so that many more primary schools have access to a qualified primary teacher able to teach Mandarin.
- Parents will be given a ‘3Rs Guarantee’ that every pupil who falls behind at primary school and early in secondary school will receive special one-to-one or small-group catch-up provision. This will include up to 40,000 six and seven year olds benefiting from extra tuition in English and Maths through ‘Every Child a Reader’ and ‘Every Child Counts’, and 300,000 receiving ten hours of one-to-one tuition in both English and Maths when they are older.
- For primary-age children, we are guaranteeing childcare and constructive activities from 8am until 6pm in term-time at their own or a neighbouring school; this entitlement will particularly help busy working parents juggle work and family life. We are extending the provision of free school meals so that an additional half a million primary school children in families on low incomes will benefit from healthy and nutritious food, and we are trialing free school meals for all primary school children in pilot areas across the country. Together, these schemes will thoroughly test the case for universal free school meals, with the results available by autumn 2011.

- All secondary school pupils will have a Personal Tutor of Studies, and we will work with schools to extend one-to-one or small-group tuition to pupils in the run-up to their GCSEs. Such an education should no longer be the preserve of the wealthiest few, but a central part of the curriculum.
- More young people will be able to study single science subjects and modern foreign languages. Diplomas will strengthen the status and quality of vocational study and bring together academic and vocational programmes. And the Gifted and Talented programme will be reformed and improved, guaranteeing additional personalised support. We will review the qualifications system in 2013, with any changes taking place in the Parliament after next. Meanwhile, the new independent exam regulator will ensure that standards are being maintained.
- Because the learning environment itself matters, we will take forward our Building Schools for the Future programme to rebuild or refurbish secondary schools, giving our children first-rate facilities that support inspirational teaching and access to ICT, sports and the arts.
- Teachers have strong new powers to ensure order and discipline and we will support their use. Home School Agreements will be strengthened, making clear the responsibilities of families and pupils. Every parent will agree to adhere to the school's behaviour rules, signing contracts each year facing real consequences if they fail to live up to them, including the option of a court-imposed parenting order. Safer School Partnerships will be extended to every school where the head or parents demand it.
- Alternative education for excluded pupils will be transformed. New providers will be encouraged to take over existing Pupil Referral Units, pioneering approaches that bring order and discipline back to young people's lives. More will be invested in anti-bullying interventions including tackling homophobic bullying.
- Cadet forces will move increasingly into state schools and we will expand spare time activities for young people, doubling those available – including sport – on Friday and Saturday nights, with neighbourhood police teams closely involved in areas where youth crime is highest. Teacher training institutions will be asked to provide specialist courses for teachers in promoting pupils' resilience and responsibility.
- We are determined to narrow the gap between these children and their peers, and to continue to invest in specialist services, including short breaks for disabled children. Learning from the best systems around the world, we will improve foster and residential care. We will expand specialised foster care for the most vulnerable children and the Care2Work programme for all care leavers.
- Through Children's Trusts, children and youth services will work closely with schools and colleges, increasingly co-locating wider children's services with schools. Early intervention programmes with a proven impact will be promoted. We will continue to reduce teenage pregnancy rates, with compulsory, high-quality Sex and Relationship Education.
- Ensuring all children are safe from abuse and harm will remain a top priority. The new Vetting and Barring system will protect children without being unduly burdensome or interfering in private family arrangements. Social work training will be radically overhauled, raising the status and standards of the profession, and we will establish a National College of Social Work. We will publish detailed Serious Case Review summaries that explain the facts, but keep full reports out of the public domain in order to protect children's identities.
- We are committed to an historic change: raising the education and training leaving age to 18. All young people will stay on in learning until 18; Education Maintenance Allowances will be retained and there will be an entitlement to an apprenticeship place in 2013 for all suitably qualified 16-18 year olds.
- Further education colleges are the backbone of our post-school education system and they are leading the way with new Diplomas, working with schools. We will introduce greater freedom for all colleges to respond to local community needs and free them up from red tape. Students will be given clearer information on the quality of courses on offer, with a 'traffic-light' grading system for all courses and colleges. To complement vocational learning for 14-19 year olds in schools and colleges, we will pioneer University Technical Colleges and new Studio Schools that offer innovative curricula involving practical learning and paid work.
- Advanced apprenticeships will be radically expanded, creating up to 70,000 places a year. These provide well-respected routes into high-skilled careers and further study at university and will support our ambition that three-quarters of young people enter higher education or complete an advanced apprenticeship or equivalent technician-level qualification by the time they are 30. New apprenticeship scholarships will enable the best apprentices to go on to higher education.
- We will open up opportunity for people from families on low incomes to enter professions like the media and law, expanding paid internships for students. To increase social mobility, careers advice for young people, including for younger children, will be overhauled, ensuring much better information and guidance.

Liberal Democrat Manifesto

- Ensure children get the individual attention they need by **cutting class sizes (Pupil Premium)**. To give every child a fair start in life, the Liberal Democrats will spend an extra £2.5bn on schools, guaranteeing them the money they need to support children who are struggling. It will be targeted at schools taking on children who need more help and can be used to cut class sizes and make sure they get the individual support they need. An average primary school could cut classes to 20, with a typical secondary school able to cut classes to just 16 or start a programme of catch-up classes for 160 pupils.
- **Scrap unfair University Tuition Fees**. To get a degree, young people are saddled with thousands of pounds of debt when it is tough enough to get a job, get on the housing ladder and make ends meet. The Liberal Democrats are the only party which believes university education should be free and admissions based on ability not bank balance. We will scrap unfair tuition fees for all students taking their first degrees saving them nearly £10,000 each. We have a financially responsible plan to phase fees out over six years, so that the change is affordable in these difficult economic times. In our first year, we will scrap fees for final year students, so future graduates have their debt slashed by over £3,000.
- Education Freedom Act. Teachers want to get the best from children but they are held back because of constant government interference which stops them from spending time with their pupils. The Liberal Democrats believe that all schools should be free from meddling politicians to work in creative and interesting ways to make sure every child gets a fair start in life. We will slim down the curriculum and pass an Education Freedom Act banning politicians from getting involved in the day to day running of schools.
- Introduce a **Pupil Premium to close the performance gap between children from rich and poor families**. £2.5bn extra would be used immediately to bring the funding of the poorest and most educationally disadvantaged 1 million children up to levels in private schools. Within one Parliament extend the Pupil Premium to other disadvantaged pupils, to cover around 2.5 million children in total. Allow schools to spend the Pupil Premium on cutting class sizes, boosting one to one tuition, financial incentives for teachers to work in the most challenging schools, extended school days or after school tuition and holiday support. Provide funding to cut class sizes for children aged 5-7 to private school levels – to around 15 children per class.
- Scrap the 600 page National Curriculum and replace it with a slimmed down **Minimum Curriculum Entitlement**.
- Radically slim down the system of national testing, and re-invest the savings in diagnostic assessment and supporting early interventions to help improve pupils' literacy and numeracy.
- Introduce a **General Diploma**, to be taken by all pupils, **incorporating within it GCSEs, A Levels**, and existing proven vocational qualifications.
- Ensure there are **incentives to stretch all pupils** by replacing the Government's present GCSE target which places too much emphasis on C/D borderline pupils.
- Require the General Teaching Council to develop a formal programme of continuous professional development (including a requirement for a Masters qualification) as part of a new system requiring teachers regularly to re-centre their fitness to practice, as in other professions.
- Reform teacher training by increasing learning overseen by established teachers in the classroom.
- Reform the **existing rigid and bureaucratic National Pay and Conditions** rules, to give schools and colleges more freedom, including in offering financial and other incentives to attract teachers – particularly in shortage subjects and in schools with the most challenging catchments, while ensuring all staff receive the minimum national pay award.
- Review the existing funding formula for schools and introduce a **Fair Funding settlement for all institutions**. We would bring funding in all schools up to the level of Specialist Schools.
- Close the **unfair funding gap between pupils in school sixth forms and colleges**, by immediately raising college funding to school levels, paid for by ending the Education Maintenance Allowance bonus payments.
- Take action to ensure that every neighbourhood is served by an excellent local school or college. We would give **Local Authorities a clear strategic responsibility for oversight of school performance**, along with appropriate powers of intervention. We would ensure that all pupils leaving primary and secondary education have the skills they need.
- Extend the freedom to innovate to all schools, while ensuring a level playing field on admissions and funding through a new model of **Sponsor Managed Schools**, which would replace Academies, and which would end Labour's unfair two tier system and **restore strategic Local Authority oversight and commissioning**.
- Strengthen school governing bodies, with: incentives for employers to release staff; additional governor training; and remuneration for Chairs of Governors on the same basis as for NHS Trust members.
- Pass an Education Freedom Act, to devolve power from central government to schools, **local authorities and parents**. The central department of Children, Schools and Families' would lose powers to micro-manage education and be more than halved in size.
- Establish an independent Educational Standards Authority (ESA) to restore confidence in standards.
- Allow parents and pupils to choose schools, and not schools to choose pupils, by stopping the establishment of new schools which select by ability, aptitude or faith, and by introducing policies to reduce radically all existing forms of selection.
- Require **local authorities to run a truly independent career and course advisory service** for young people
- Introduce a new pupil right to move from school to **college or work-related learning provider at age 14**.

- Scrap the Labour Government's plan to criminalise young people who leave education before age 18, and replace it with a more flexible entitlement for young people to take the additional 2 years of post-16 education when they wish to do so.
- Liberal Democrats: A New Role for Local Government
 - Local Government would have new and more powerful strategic powers to enable councils to deliver their statutory role as strategic commissioners for services to children in their locality. We want local authorities to act as champions of children, parents and families, ensuring that the delivery of education is not dependent only on individual institutions. We would give councils the powers they need to fulfil this role.
 - Local Government would be:
 - Strategic commissioners of services for children 0-19, including local education services.
 - Responsible for ensuring there are sufficient 5-19 school and college places and that pupils can access their full curriculum entitlement within the locality.
 - The first tier of accountability for all state funded schools and colleges, including all schools presently within the Academies and Trust Schools programmes. Local Authorities would be enabled to consolidate the School Improvement Partner model in their own arrangements for school support and improvement.
 - Empowered to intervene where state funded schools are failing.
 - Charged with purchasing or providing school support services such as those presently provided through 'National Strategies', where this responsibility cannot be devolved to schools themselves.
 - Co-ordinator of children's social and welfare services, supporting schools and colleges.
 - Charged with strategic oversight of local admissions, to ensure adherence to the Admissions Code.
 - Responsible for ensuring that all pupils have access to independent, objective advice at key change points in their educational career.
 - In control of the principal programme of capital investment to maintain high quality buildings and to provide for new capacity.
 - Responsible for the assessment and, where necessary, commissioning of support for children with higher levels of SEN.
 - Able to top up the funding levels for children from the local authority area, above and beyond the levels fixed by the Pupil Premium.
 - Overseen in its functions by the Audit Commission and OFSTED.
 - Responsible for ensuring compliance by all schools with equality and human rights legislation.