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SCHOOLS**WEEK**

**FE Week**

— GENERAL —  
**ELECTION 2017**

A CLOSER LOOK AT ELECTION PLEDGES



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## ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL WITH FE WEEK



FREDDIE WHITTAKER  
@FCDWHITTAKER

When I wrote my last general election supplement in 2015, I never thought I'd be doing another over two years. But that's the world we live in now, so here we go again.

Education is once again a key issue on

the campaign trail and in these 20 pages, we aim to bring you all the pledges from the three main English political parties, along with stacks of news, analysis and reaction.

On page three, we take a look at what the party leaders have been up to during school and college visits across England. Pages four and five set out Labour's plans for schools and skills, and include an article from Angela Rayner, the woman who would be education secretary in a Jeremy Corbyn government.

On page six, we present *Schools Week's* analysis of Labour's policies and the outcome of a readers' survey on the manifesto, while page seven has the FE sector's reaction to Corbyn's plan for skills.

Pages eight and nine have all the

details of the Conservatives' education manifesto, but we're afraid we can't bring you an article from Justine Greening, the education secretary, because our repeated requests were ignored.

On pages 12 and 13, you can read the analysis of the schools and FE components of the Tory manifesto, then pages 14 and 15 set out what the Liberal Democrats would do in the unlikely event that they win power on June 8.

Pages 16 and 17 are where you can read the results of FE Week's survey of its readers on both manifestos and hear from the paper's editor Nick Linford. There's also details of what the sector organisations want for education.

And finally, on pages 18 and 19, you can read more expert reaction and analysis from the schools sector, including a little

something from *Schools Week* editor Laura McInerney.

Enjoy.

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## Manifestos - missing the point?

The general election has come at an interesting time.

The challenge of Brexit, weakened wage growth and the need to upskill our domestic skills base are just some of the challenges that we currently face as a nation. Amid all of this, education reform is once again a high profile item in the various major parties' manifestos.

It is reassuring that all parties are looking into addressing skills gaps, through a variety of methods - something that has been revisited by various governments over the years. Our hope is that this time, the elected government will look into supporting our current skills base (still weighted heavily towards the services sector), as well as incentivising the future economy, as we look towards leaving the European Union.

Across all manifestos, we see a welcome commitment to apprenticeship uptake, in one form or another. Apprenticeships have been proven time and again to provide increased

wage and productivity returns for the employers who take them on.

However, as has been outlined many times in FE Week and elsewhere, employers create apprenticeships, not governments. Therefore, perhaps a more effective strategy would be for Government to invest in businesses to provide increased opportunities to take on apprentices. Arguably the apprenticeship levy was created with this intention but in practice we can foresee this funding being used to reskill existing employers. Measuring apprenticeship starts does not take into account the longer term jobs created, or those apprentices who simply didn't complete.

It's also worth noting that none of the manifestos seem to address one of the key operational concerns we keep hearing about apprenticeships; the lack of qualifications or a transferable record of skills and behaviours acquired. We are currently discussing the importance of qualifications as part of apprenticeship achievement with the Institute

for Apprenticeships, and we will continue this work with whichever government is in place on 9 June.

Ultimately, a large amount of the future skills base of the economy is currently in schools settings throughout this country. We'd welcome any measures which would increase the range of options available to learners in these settings, whether that is through safeguarding and reforming the funding available for schools, widening the curriculum with teacher involvement, or providing opportunities for broader enrichment opportunities in schools.

It is this learner engagement piece that I think is missing. Too often, the learner has significant curriculum changes brought in through government reforms, with minimum measurement of impact, beyond the pupil's immediate progression destination.

“  
**We'd welcome any measures which would increase the range of options available to learners**

At NCFE, we call upon and look forward to working with Government after 8 June to create meaningful and fulfilling opportunities for success for learners of all ages so that they can empower themselves and enrich our society.

# WEEK AND SCHOOLS WEEK

## JEREMY CORBYN LABOUR

Famously hard to manage while on the campaign trail, Jeremy Corbyn seems to spend a lot of time during school and college-based campaign stops engaging with pupils – and actually enjoying it.

A picture of the Labour leader reading the Michael Rosen classic ‘We’re going on a bear hunt’ quickly went viral as a result of his terrific facial expressions.

Corbyn and his education spokesperson Angela Rayner also proved adept at another great campaign photocall technique: wearing white coats.



The pair spent time with learners like Alexander Devaney at Leeds City College on May 10 while launching their plans for a national education service, observing bakery skills in the kitchens at the institution’s impressive Printworks Campus.



## THERESA MAY CONSERVATIVES

After that picture of the PM grimacing at children during a school visit earlier this year, Theresa May has been adopting an altogether jollier composure for her education campaigning stops in recent weeks.

She was all smiles when she observed a physics experiment at King’s Maths School with head Dan Abramson and student Amran Kosmo in March, and looked a lot more comfortable when she met eight-year-old Akaal Singh at Nishkam Primary School in Birmingham on May 16.



However, “strong and stable” May was forced to dodge questions about which Harry Potter character she most resembled, although she did admit to reading and enjoying all seven of the books.

“I don’t think I’m similar to any of the characters in Harry Potter but they are a great read for adults as well as for children,” she said, relatably, during the Nishkam visit.



## TIM FARRON LIBERAL DEMOCRATS

If there’s one thing you can say about Tim Farron, it’s that he likes a good photo opportunity.

The Lib Dem leader seemed at home when he joined a gardening class at Lewannick Primary School in Cornwall, grinning for the cameras on May 10.

He later donned goggles to meet engineering students during a visit to Bath College in Somerset, on May 16.



Above: Press Association Images

# Labour manifesto drops leaked plans for na

Controversial plans, including the reintroduction of national pay bargaining for teachers, have been dropped from Labour's official election manifesto after they appeared in a leaked draft.

The draft manifesto, which was first leaked to *Schools Week*, contained ambitious plans to bring back pay bargaining for teachers after 26 years, alongside a promise that local authorities would be allowed to open new schools.

The party had also signalled that it wanted to cover apprentices' travel costs, which it said "currently run to an average of £24 a week – a quarter of earnings if apprentices are on the minimum wage".

However, there is no mention of any of these three policies in the party's official manifesto, which was released a week later.

The party now claims it wants to bring back "national pay settlements" for teachers, and while it says all schools will be "democratically accountable", the manifesto stops short of giving more powers to councils.

It is now unclear whether a pledge once made by Jeremy Corbyn, to let councils open and run schools, which has previously been confirmed by party officials outside the manifesto process, is still Labour policy.

The Labour leader told *Schools Week* last month that he wanted to see councils given permission to open and run new schools, or take over academies if they wanted to, and the reference in the draft manifesto to councils running schools appeared to confirm his commitment.

Despite this, Labour sources this week didn't explain why the two policies were removed from the final version of the manifesto, or whether the party remains committed to Corbyn's prior commitment. FE Week meanwhile calculated that

the £24 per week set aside for apprentice travel would have cost around £1,200 per apprentice every year. If applied to all 899,400 apprentices who participated last academic year, the total cost would have amounted to just over £1 billion.

But shadow skills minister Gordon Marsden, who previously committed to funding apprentice travel at FE Week's Annual Apprenticeship Conference in March, last week explained that the pledge would only cover transport for 16-to-19 starts, at a cost of around £99 million.

Asked why the commitment had been dropped from the final manifesto, a Labour spokesperson would only say: "I'm afraid we don't comment on leaks."

The rest of the official manifesto is almost identical to the leak.

Plans to extend free school meals to all primary schools remain in place, as do proposals for counselling services for all secondaries, and an exemption from the apprenticeship levy for schools.

Labour also wants to make adult education free, abandon plans for new technical colleges, bring funding for 16- to 18-year-olds in line with key stage four baselines and set a target to double the number of completed apprenticeships at NVQ level three by 2022.

The party's costings document, released along with the manifesto, confirms plans to spend an additional £6.3 billion on schools, which will increase funding, protect against losses from the national funding formula, and also covers its free school meals and arts pupil premium pledges.

Labour says its plans to introduce free FE tuition, equalise 16-to-19 funding and restore the education maintenance allowance will cost £2.5 billion.

The spending will be funded through a combination of corporation tax rises and VAT on private school fees.



Jeremy Corbyn

## ANGELA RAYNER

Shadow education secretary writes for *Schools Week* and *FE Week*



Theresa May's promise of a "strong and stable" government will come as news to the many parents and teachers I have met who have seen their schools decline over the last seven years of Tory-led rule.

Since 2010, teachers have been leaving the profession in record numbers; class sizes are rising and state-educated applicants to colleges and universities are falling due to absurdly high tuition fees prices.

Last year, when May took over from David Cameron, she did not seek to address these problems. Instead, she pursued a meaningless policy of a "new generation" of grammar schools, which will do nothing to help the overwhelming majority of families across the country.

Worst of all, the Tories' funding proposals for schools, which may see funding cuts of up to 11 per cent per

pupil, will leave schools in the most deprived and rural areas in an extremely precarious situation.

Their manifesto went one step further: the Tories have pledged to take school meals from primary school pupils just to plug the gap in their funding.

Further education has also suffered. According to the Institute for Fiscal Studies, higher education will see a 14 per cent cut in real terms by 2020. The adult skills budget has also been cut by £1 billion.

In contrast, Labour's plans for a new National Education Service are among our boldest. In the model of our greatest achievement, the NHS, we will provide cradle to grave learning and support to everyone in the country, whatever their needs.

This means not only reversing the £3 billion in funding cuts that schools are



# Additional pay bargaining



facing, but investing in them: they will see a real-terms increase in funding over the course of the parliament.

This will allow schools to get the basics right, to spend more time focusing on the education our children receive, and less worrying about budgets, or writing letters to parents asking for a contribution just to maintain current levels of spending.

We will lift the cap on public sector pay, to end the unjustifiable squeeze on teachers' pay, as a first step to ending the Tory crisis in recruitment and retention.

Instead of delivering cuts, Labour will give further education the funding that it needs, and make lifelong learning free at the point of use for all those who need it.

Everyone, whatever their circumstances will be free to upskill and retrain whenever they need to under a Labour government, as one of the key planks of our National Education Service.

The challenges that will face Britain's post-Brexit economy will call for a highly skilled workforce, able to adapt to the structural changes facing our economy, from the decline of old industries to the rise of automation. Providing free lifelong learning will help futureproof the British

workforce, so we can adapt as a country to the challenges we face in the years and decades to come.

While we will make education free at the point of use, the Conservatives offer only more cuts and more debt for learners. We will deliver a National Education Service, while the Conservatives can only continue to lurch from crisis to crisis after seven years of failing children, parents, and those who work in our education system.

There is a clear choice in this election, between a Labour Party that has education at the heart of its manifesto, or the Tories' who have a seven year record of complete failure.

Much as May has tried to deny the comparison, the echoes of previous Tory governments and their records on public services are clear. We have gone from "Margaret Thatcher, milk snatcher" to "Theresa May takes your dinner away".

They have a new leader and a new manifesto – but make no mistake, they are the same old Tories.

By contrast, our National Education Service will transform the lives of the many, not just the few.

## Labour education pledges

### Schools

- Invest £4.8 billion in additional revenue funding to reverse cuts
- Spend £8 billion creating new school places and £13 billion maintaining buildings
- Reduce class sizes to less than 30 for five-, six- and seven-year-olds
- Introduce free school meals for all primary school children, paid for by removing VAT exemption on private school fees
- Abandon baseline tests and review SATs
- End the public sector pay cap, which affects teachers
- Give teachers "more direct involvement" in the curriculum
- Reduce "monitoring and bureaucracy"
- Consult on teacher sabbaticals
- Reintroduce national pay settlements for teachers and the negotiating body for school support staff
- Exempt schools from the apprenticeship levy, at a cost of £150 million
- Extend school-based counselling to all schools, costing £90 million
- Deliver a "SEND strategy based on inclusivity" and increase SEND teacher training
- Review the English Baccalaureate subjects and consider the inclusion of arts subjects

### Further and adult education

- Bring funding for 16- to 18-year-olds in line with key stage four base lines, while distributing the budget fairly between colleges and school sixth forms
- Restore the education maintenance allowance for 16-

to 19-year-olds

- Replace advanced learner loans and upfront course fees with direct funding, making FE courses free at the point of use
- Encourage cooperation and leadership across colleges and sixth forms, improving curriculum breadth and quality
- Set a target and provide funding for all FE teaching staff to have a teaching qualification within five years
- Extend support for training to teachers in the private sector
- Increase capital investment to equip colleges to deliver T-levels and an official pre-apprenticeship trainee programme

### Apprenticeships

- Maintain the apprenticeship levy while taking measures to ensure it is high quality
- Set a target to double the number of completed apprenticeships at NVQ level three by 2022
- Give employers more flexibility in how the levy is deployed, including allowing the levy to be used for pre-apprenticeship programme
- Guarantee trade union representation in the governance structures of the Institute for Apprenticeships
- Set targets to increase apprenticeships for people with disabilities, care leavers and veterans, and ensure broad representation of women, BAME, LGBT and disabled people in apprenticeships
- Consult on introducing incentives for large employers to overtrain apprenticeships to fill skills gaps in the supply chain
- Reverse cuts to Union Learn
- Set up a commission on lifelong learning tasked with integrating FE and HE



SCHOOLSWEEK

# Labour schools policies- the nerdy details guide

## Class sizes of under 29 for five-, six- and seven-year-olds

Schools are not currently allowed to teach infants in classes of more than 30 pupils, except under certain “lawful exceptions”.

According to the latest government data, less than five per cent of infants were taught in classes of more than 30 as of January 2016, while 44 per cent had classes numbering exactly 30.

Labour’s plan is to reduce class sizes to “under 30” for infants, which means that schools would have to ensure there are no more than 29 pupils in any infant class.

To do this, Labour says it will invest £8 billion to “ensure schools have the number of places they need” and £13 billion to bring school buildings up to standard. This is on top of an additional £4.8 billion in annual school revenue funding.

## Free lunches for all primary-aged children

The party claims this will cost between £700 million and £900 million a year, and will be paid for by removing VAT exemption on private school fees, which officials estimate would raise more than £1 billion.

According to the Institute for Fiscal Studies, Labour’s calculations of the cost of the policy are slightly undercosted. Based on how much it cost to implement the coalition government’s universal infant free school meals policy, the IFS estimates the extension to juniors could cost an extra £950 million a year.

An initial capital spend of more than £250 million would also be needed to improve kitchen and cafeteria facilities in some schools.

However, based on a pilot of universal

free meals in Newham and Durham in 2012, the IFS says that policies such as free breakfast clubs “might be a cheaper and more effective way to improve both education and health outcomes”.

## National pay conditions extended to cover academies

Labour says it will reintroduce “national pay settlements” for teachers, a slight climbdown from a pledge in the draft manifesto to bring back national pay bargaining.

The use of a more generic term for pay negotiations, rather than a specific method, represents a softening of the party’s stance, but it would nevertheless change the way teachers’ pay in academies is worked out.

The proposal also includes the reintroduction of a negotiating body for school support staff.

## Abandon baseline tests

The government is already reviewing SATs, with a view to scrapping the tests for seven-year-olds and implementing a new baseline

test for reception pupils instead.

Labour says it would go further, abandoning plans for a baseline test and putting the future of all SATs up for discussion.

This follows a disastrous year for primary testing in 2016, when new, harder tests and a series of blunders caused chaos and sparked a nationwide campaign by parents and teachers to put an end to the current “high-stakes” system of testing.

## Consultation on teacher sabbaticals

Sabbaticals are common in other countries, including Australia and New Zealand, and are said to offer teachers the chance to enhance their own learning and effectiveness.

In 2001, Labour launched a pilot of sabbaticals for experienced teachers in challenging schools, but scrapped it in 2004 following problems with low take-up, budget constraints and changing government priorities on teacher development.

Labour now says it wants to consult on introducing sabbaticals for English teachers, but is yet to set out parameters.

# Survey: what the readers say

*Schools Week* invited its subscribers to have their say on five key schools policies from the Labour Party’s manifesto.

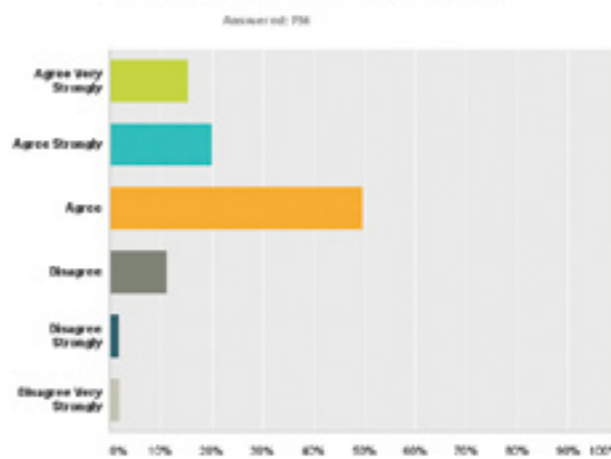
The consultation on teacher sabbaticals enjoyed huge support among readers; more than 80 per cent agreed with the idea, and over 30 per cent of these agreeing either strongly or very strongly.

More than 35 per cent of readers meanwhile agreed very strongly with plans to extend national pay conditions to academies, with the total proportion agreeing to some degree at more than 80 per cent.

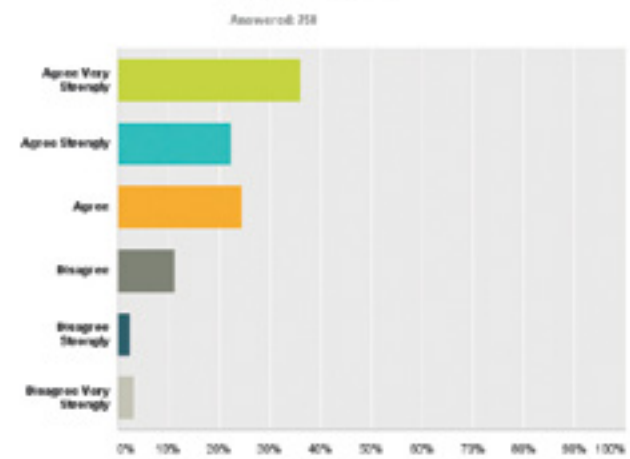
Around 80 per cent of respondents agreed with a proposal to bring in class sizes of less than 30 for five, six and seven-year-olds, with almost half of these agreeing very strongly.

However, more than half of readers disagreed that free lunches should be extended to all primary pupils.

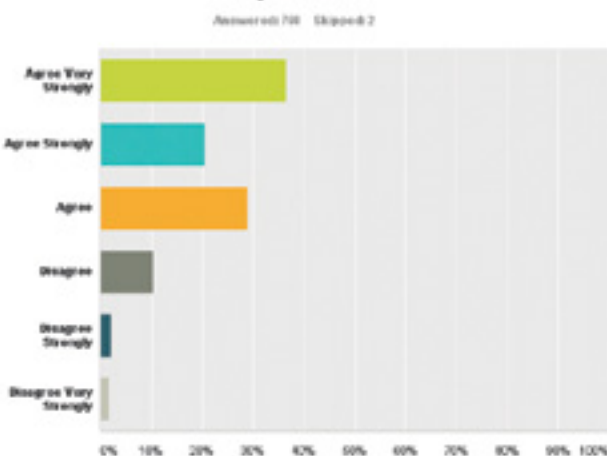
Q2 Consultation on teacher sabbaticals



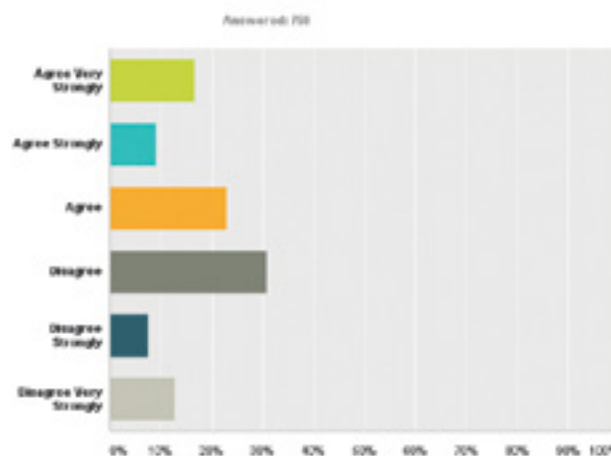
Q3 National pay conditions extended to cover academies



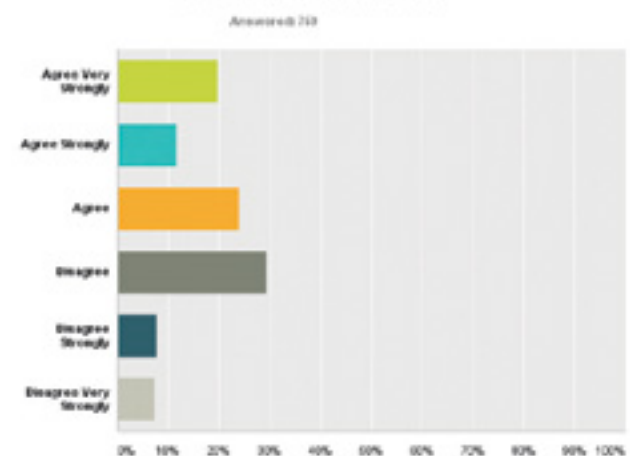
Q8 Have class sizes of under 30 for 5, 6 and 7 year olds



Q9 Free lunches for all primary-aged children



Q10 Abandon baseline tests



# FE Week



## FE figures cast doubt on lifelong learning plan

**ALIX ROBERTSON**  
@ALIXROBERTSON4

The Labour party's ambitious pledge to offer "free lifelong education in FE colleges" has created a stir within the sector – leading some key figures to ask how it could realistically be achieved.

Graham Taylor, principal and chief executive at New College Swindon, did not hold back in sharing his doubts with FE Week about the "major offer" which he believes would "open up the floodgates".

He said: "The savage cuts over the last 10 years mean that the FE workforce is 30 per cent lower than it was 10 years ago, and there are literally millions fewer adult learners in the system because people have got to pay for it now.

"[Free education] is a major offer. But what any party would have to do then is cap it."

Commenting further on Labour's proposal to replace advanced learner loans and fees with direct funding, Mr Taylor said: "Free at the point of use again just staggers me. I just don't think even if they got into power it's achievable."

Government skills adviser Professor Lady Alison Wolf told us she was "not enthused by a manifesto which promises free everything everywhere".

She said: "I believe that fees, backed by income-contingent loans, play a necessary part in any sustainable funding regime for

tertiary education that is both universal and of high quality.

"The obsession with free university tuition is highly regressive," she went on. "If you make huge commitments to 'free' programmes, they are all likely to be seriously under-funded."

FE policy analyst Mick Fletcher was also sceptical, and said that the details of Labour's promise for greater investment in FE are "perhaps less solid than one might wish".

"In one sense the Labour manifesto is a proposal to turn the clock back – to a world in which FE students received free tuition instead of having to take out loans and poorer students got support via Education Maintenance Allowances which incentivised participation," he said. "These proposals look to support students rather than colleges."

In contrast, Paul Eeles, chief executive of the Skills and Education Group, backed the proposals. He said: "We fully support Labour's pledge to introduce free, lifelong learning in FE colleges.

"We believe this will provide those re-entering education with the opportunity to retrain, and progress to higher skills levels."

David Hughes, chief executive of the Association of Colleges, was also positive about the plans, and said that "to be fit as a post-Brexit UK, we need to be more self-sufficient in skills with a new culture of lifelong learning which is accessible to



Gordon Marsden

everyone".

"The Labour Party has recognised the vital role of colleges in delivering education and training to people of all ages," he continued.

"The next government will need to invest more, so it is good to see the Labour party pledge to put more funding in for young people and adults."

Stephen Evans, chief executive at the Learning and Work Institute, said the promise to invest in FE would be "central to our future prosperity and giving a fairer chance in life to those who too often miss out".

He added: "We do, however, need a learning revolution to find new ways to engage people. Extra investment is always welcome, but the real test is the impact it has on people's lives."

Sally Hunt, the general secretary of the University and College Union welcomed Labour's recognition of the sector.

"We urgently need extra teachers to help meet the growing demand for high-level skills in our economy," she said.

"Proposals to reintroduce student support and scrap learning loans show a commitment to removing barriers to learning."

### Sue Pember

Director of policy and external relations at Hoxex



Hoxex welcomes Labour's commitment to determine a strategy for lifelong learning and their promise of new funding for adult education.

However we are concerned that several of their initiatives are limited to colleges and feel this was an oversight.

We are also disappointed that there is no mention of the link between adult education and wellbeing or mental health and feel this was an opportunity lost to highlight such an important issue.

### James Kewin

Deputy chief executive of the Sixth Form Colleges Association



We were pleased to hear the commitment from Angela Rayner to reverse the decline in 16-19 funding.

It is also worth remembering that the high-skilled economy envisaged by Labour will be driven by leaders, scientists, technicians, engineers and others who will have followed an academic path during sixth form. So any increase in funding for technical education should be matched by an increase for students studying A-levels and other academic qualifications.

### Shakira Martin

President-elect of the National Union of Students



Labour's intention to continue with the recommendations of the Sainsbury Review provides some much-needed continuity.

UTCs are a failure and institutes of technology are likely to follow, so it's good to see the recognition that FE doesn't need new technical colleges, but reinvestment.

While targets to increase apprenticeships for people with protected characteristics are a good place to start, Labour needs to ensure these targets are accompanied by policies and financial packages.

### Mark Dawe

Chief executive of the Association of Employment and Learning Providers



Labour's focus on quality is welcome but we should be careful about using completions as targets, as they may cause employers to take only the most able applicants, and we must never lose sight of apprenticeships as a driver of social inclusion.

We are seeing better progression rates to level three apprenticeships but again the achievement of a level two apprenticeship can be a fantastic achievement for many young people who have received high-quality training and supervision.

# Conservatives pledge ‘great merit

The Conservatives have claimed that their manifesto plans for schools and skills will create “the world’s great meritocracy”.

Education features prominently in a document launched by Theresa May in Halifax earlier this month, which contains dozens of proposals but not much additional investment either in schools or FE.

On most issues, the Conservatives’ manifesto is business as usual. The party remains committed to its free schools programme, and has pledged to build 100 more every year. It will also continue towards its target of three million apprenticeship starts by 2020.

Its pledge to have every 11-year-old know their times tables by heart also remains, as does a desire to see 90 per cent of secondary school pupils entered for the EBacc subjects – although a previous plan to reach that target by 2020 has been abandoned.

There are however some significant omissions in the document. University technical colleges, a top priority for the Cameron government, which pledged to build one within reach of every town, are conspicuous in their absence, and critics claim the manifesto does not go far enough on teacher recruitment and retention.

There are also some unexpected pledges. The Conservatives have taken the surprise decision to allow large firms to use funds raised through the apprenticeship levy to pay wages, but it is feared that this will put further strain on the levy, which is also expected to fund apprenticeship training in companies not subject to the

charge.

The party also says it will forgive the university tuition fees of new teachers for as long as they remain in the profession, an approach similar to that previously advocated by the centre-right think-tank Policy Exchange.

Many of the proposals set out in the last government’s ‘Schools that work for everyone’ consultation have also made it into the document.

The pledge to end the ban on new selective schools features prominently, making it almost impossible for grammar-sceptic Tory MPs and the House of Lords to block such a change in the law if the Conservatives win a majority.

The party also says it will work with the Independent Schools Council to get at least 100 private schools to sponsor academies or set up free schools, another green paper policy.

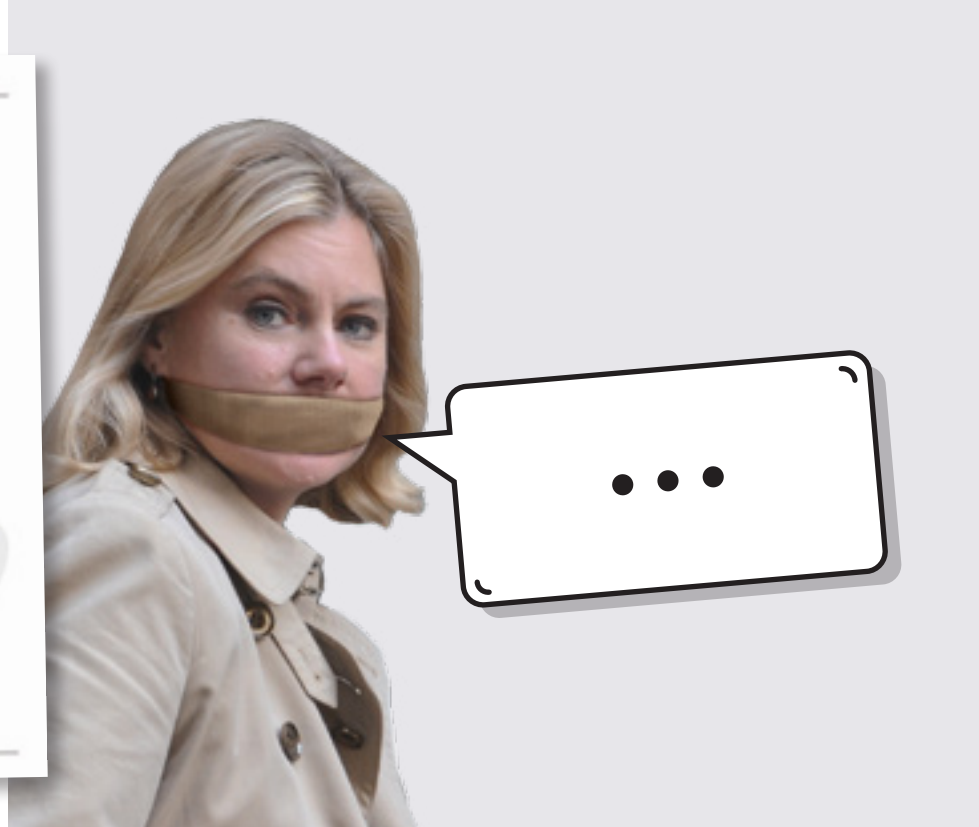
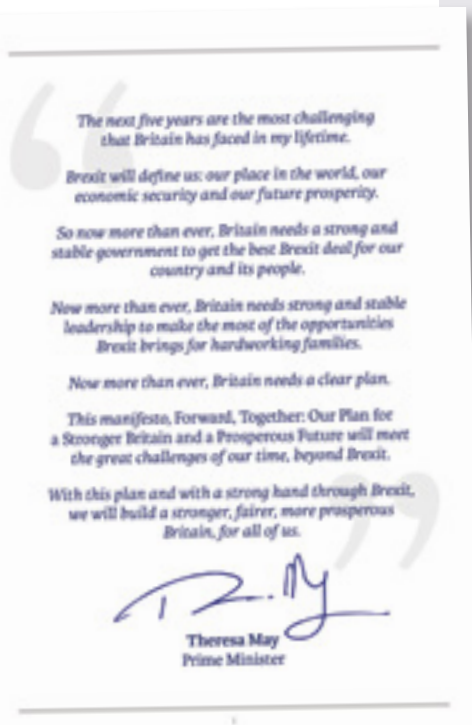
Universities that charge the highest fees will also have to take on responsibility for state schools, and the 50 per cent cap on faith-based admissions for oversubscribed free schools will be removed.

A major review of tertiary education funding is also promised, which could include a review the future of advanced learning loans. However, there is nothing mentioned about how the Conservatives plan to support skills training for small- and medium-sized enterprises, despite the current panic that providers are receiving much-reduced allocations for delivering apprenticeships to smaller non-levy employers for the next eight months.



Theresa May

## JUSTINE GREENING Education secretary





# ocracy'



PA/WIRE



The Conservative Party was asked several times to provide an article from Justine Greening for this supplement, but no response was received by the time we went to press.

## Conservative education pledges

### Schools

- Build 100 free schools every year
- Prohibit councils from creating any new places in schools that have been rated either 'inadequate' or 'requires improvement' by Ofsted
- Universities that charge maximum fees must sponsor free schools or academies
- New funding to open a specialist maths school in every major city in England
- Replace unfair and ineffective inclusivity rules preventing establishment of new Roman Catholic schools
- At least 100 independent schools to sponsor academies or found state schools, keeping option of changing tax status if progress is not made
- Lift ban on selective schools – with conditions such as allowing pupils to join at others than 11
- Review school admissions policy
- Expect every 11-year-old to know times table off by heart
- Improve schools' accountability at key stage three
- Expect 75 per cent of pupils to have entered EBacc by end of next parliament, with 90 per cent by 2025
- Curriculum fund to encourage Britain's leading cultural and scientific institutions develop knowledge-rich materials
- Consider how Ofsted can give parents more information on what their children are being taught
- Continue bursaries to attract top graduates into teaching
- Forgiveness on student loan repayments while they are teaching
- Create a single jobs portal
- Make sure no school has budget cut as part of new funding formula
- Increase overall schools budget by £4 billion by 2022
- Continue to protect pupil premium
- Scrap universal infant free school meals
- Primary schools in England will offer a free school breakfast to all pupils
- Create a new 'schools map' to help parents choose a school that is right for their child – key information about quality of teaching, attainment and curriculum
- Work with schools to make sure those with intakes from one predominant racial, cultural or religious background teach British values
- Funding to help primary schools develop nurseries
- Introduce presumption all new primary schools should include a nursery

- Allow maintained nurseries to take on 'academy freedoms', and join multi-academy trusts
- Introduce mental health first aid training for teachers in every school
- Review support for children in need to understand why their outcomes are so poor
- Ensure that teaching assistants can become qualified teachers via a degree apprenticeship route
- Explore teaching apprenticeships sponsored by major companies, especially in STEM subjects

### Skills

- National Productivity Investment Fund, including £250 million in funding for skills by 2020
- Double the immigration skills charge for business employing skilled workers from outside the EU
- Establish new institutes of technology, backed by leading employers and linked to leading universities, in every major city in England
- Launch a major review of funding across tertiary education as a whole
- Deal with local skills shortages and ensure that colleges deliver the skills required by local businesses through skills advisory panels and local enterprise partnerships
- Deliver commitment to create three million apprenticeships for young people by 2020
- Allow large firms to pass levy funds to small firms in their supply chain
- Introduce a UCAS-style portal for technical education
- Introduce significantly discounted bus and train travel for apprentices
- Introduce a new right to request leave for training for all employees
- Introduce a national retraining scheme, with the costs training met by the government
- Introduce a right to lifelong learning in digital skills
- Replace 13,000 existing technical qualifications with new qualifications, known as T-levels
- Increase the number of teaching hours by 50 per cent, to an average of 900 hours per year
- Invest in further education colleges to make sure they have world-class equipment and facilities
- Create a new national programme to attract experienced industry professionals to work in FE colleges
- Make a modern technical education available to everyone, throughout their lives, to provide the skills they need

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# esif - still in the dark.



## Comment by Paul Turner, NCFE Futures Leader

The main parties have published their manifestos and it's interesting to see the focus on schools, technical education and wholesale funding reviews.

Unfortunately, there is no mention or detail on the issue of replacing ESIF. Yes, I know that manifestos are top level, headline grabbing documents, but just a few days ago even the Welsh Government was talking about more EU millions funding investment to support communities and individuals.

Why then, is there this wholesale omission of what has become one of the most important support mechanisms in the UK for those that are not just disengaged but over the horizon and out of sight?

EU funding has been used over the past 2 decades to better the futures of communities and individuals across the North East and North West of England as well as Northern Ireland, yet neither the Conservatives nor Labour parties mention it, or any replacement, in their manifestos. The Liberal Democrats offer only a small snippet, aiming to "protect...other EU funded schemes which increase opportunities for young people."

We're about to enter into a period of great uncertainty both economically and educationally and it's time we had reassurance. We need a skills base of well-educated and motivated young people to take up the reins of those who will retire. We need to engage those on the periphery and bring them into the line of sight of schools, providers and employers. Most of all, we're going to need financial support to do this.

We can't continue to have such uncertainty, the decision needs to be made as to what will replace ESIF so that we can plan, progress and prove we can meet the challenges that are coming.



# FE Week

## Levy architect 'puzzled' by wages promise

JUDE BURKE  
@JUDEBURKE77

**A** Conservative pledge to allow large employers to use apprenticeship levy funds to pay wages has left the government adviser who first proposed the charge scratching her head.

Professor Alison Wolf told FE Week that she had been “totally puzzled” by the manifesto promise.

Highlighting the “apparent commitment to let businesses spend their levy on the wages of people retraining – not even apprentices, just ‘retrainers’,” she asked: “Where did that come from?”

“It could swallow the whole levy up, at speed,” she warned.

Her comments echoed concern from others in the sector that it would place additional strain on the levy, and divert cash away from apprenticeships at smaller, non-levy-paying employers.

But the proposal was welcomed in some quarters – most notably at the CBI.

Neil Carberry, its director for people and skills policy, said it was “a good first step towards creating the flexible skills levy that employers want to see”.

Another curveball in the manifesto was the move to make institutes of technology higher education institutions.

David Hughes, the chief executive of the Association of Colleges, warned that the apparent policy change “leaves a risk that education provision at levels four and five will not get the attention it needs”.

The retention of the target for three

million new starts by 2020 – one of the central planks of recent government apprenticeships policy – received a mixed reaction.

Some welcomed the renewed commitment, while others expressed relief that the target hadn’t been increased.

And Mick Fletcher, Policy Consortium’s founder, reiterated long-standing concerns that “sticking to an arbitrary target of three million starts will prioritise quantity over quality”.

A commitment to review funding for tertiary education was welcomed – but interpretations of what it might cover differed widely.

Shakira Martin, the NUS’ president-elect and current vice-president for FE, said a review should look at “how students can get access to financial support across different routes”, while James Kewin, the deputy chief executive of the Sixth Form Colleges’ Association, said it “should focus on the growing gap between the funding made available to educate sixth formers and the actual cost of delivering an academic curriculum”.

But Sally Hunt, the general secretary of the University and Colleges Union, warned there was “no mention of extra resource for colleges in the short term” and called for “additional investment rather than simply shifting existing spending around.”

Questions were also raised about the proposal to double the immigration skills charge, and whether FE providers would see any of the cash raised.

Mark Dawe, the chief executive of the Association of Employment and

Learning Providers, suggested “it would be good if this was allocated to SMEs’ apprenticeships”.

An increased focus on lifelong learning and a proposed new national retraining programme received a cautious welcome from some, including Dr Sue Pember, the director of policy at Hoxex.

While she applauded the commitment to “making technical education available to everyone throughout their lives”, she urged the Conservatives to learn the “lessons of the past” and ensure the “new programmes are relevant and meaningful”.

And Stephen Evans, the chief executive of the Learning and Work Institute, said he would “like to have seen more of a commitment on at least protecting the

adult education budget and promoting lifelong learning more widely and for all age groups”.

Other policies proposed by the Conservatives and embraced by the sector include support for apprentices’ travel costs, and a commitment to implementing the Sainsbury review recommendations.

And plans for a new programme to attract experienced industry professionals to the FE sector was welcomed by Paul Eeles, Federation of Awarding Bodies chair.

“We believe this recognises the vital need to invest in the further education workforce and develop the essential skills to address the Sainsbury review and the government’s post-16 skills plan,” he said.



Robert Halfon

### Alison Wolf

Professor of public sector management, King’s College London



I’m delighted to see a strong focus on technical education, and continued support for T-levels. I’m also pleased to see the promise of a funding review. Reiterating the three million apprenticeship pledge is better than coming in with a higher one – it was probably too much to hope that they would abandon it.

### Mick Fletcher

Founder, Policy Consortium



The proposal for institutes of technology signals an important change – it seems to place them firmly within the HE orbit, which is probably good for technical education and students but not so good for FE colleges. A comprehensive review of funding tertiary education makes sense but there is no guarantee the outcome will be good news.

### Sally Hunt

General secretary, UCU



The manifesto does include some promising proposals like a national retraining scheme and time off to train, but the suggestion that apprenticeship levy funds could be spent on wages rather than training is concerning. The next government must not let employers off the hook in paying for the skilled workforce upon which they rely.

### David Hughes

Chief executive, Association of Colleges



The Conservatives have pledged to increase funding for technical education so that teaching hours will rise by 50 per cent to an average of 900 hours per year. This is a great first step but will only support around 25 per cent of 16- to 19-year-olds and leaves education for the rest of this age group severely underfunded.

# SCHOOLS WEEK



## Conservative schools policies- the nerdy details guide

### Have 75 per cent of pupils studying the EBacc subjects at GCSE by 2022

The government consulted 18 months ago on having 90 per cent of children study the EBacc subjects at GCSE, though the result has so far not been released.

Sources close to the process say that's because there aren't currently enough teachers in some subjects – particularly modern languages.

Moving to a target of 75 per cent means the government has more time to recruit more teachers in problem subjects.

### Overturn the ban on selective schools

As expected, the pledge is to overturn laws banning new selective schools. By putting it in the manifesto, the Lords will not be able to block it.

The Conservatives say lifting the ban would be subject to certain conditions, such as “allowing pupils to join at other ages as well as 11”.

No other conditions are mentioned.

### Create an apprenticeship (non-degree) route for teaching assistants to gain QTS

Ministers are already working on a teaching apprenticeship, prompting

speculation that it could eventually replace School Direct.

However, the government has previously stipulated that such a route would only be open to those who already have a degree, protecting the graduate-only nature of the teaching profession.

Allowing TAs to become qualified teachers through an apprenticeship would effectively create a no-degree route to QTS, although the qualification received at the end of the qualification may be at a level equivalent to a degree.

### Scrap universal infant lunches and provide breakfast instead

The Conservatives estimate that current policy costs around £600 million a year but for a tenth of that would instead provide free breakfasts – which have been found to have an impact on achievement, behaviour

and attendance.

The money saved will form part of an extra £1 billion annual investment in schools to increase the schools budget by £4 billion by 2022.

The rest will be found through “better systems” for the student loans companies (£200 million), departmental efficiencies (£160 million) and the soft drinks levy (£10 million).

### Prevent extra places at Ofsted grade three or four schools

This is likely to be unpopular with councils under pressure to create school places to accommodate population growth.

Last year, research by the New Schools Network revealed that 113,000 new school places had been created in schools rated inadequate or requiring improvement in the previous five years.

# Survey: what the readers say

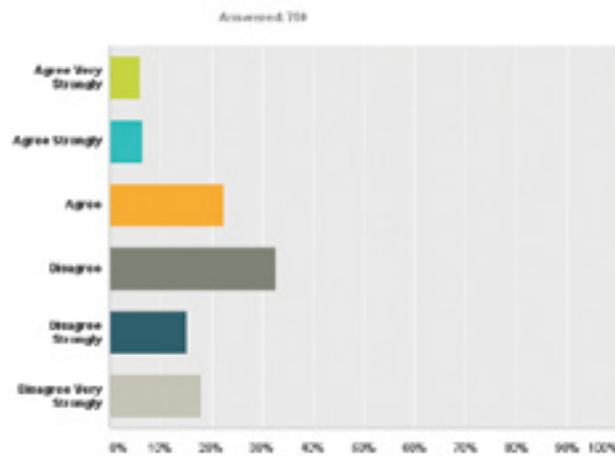
Schools Week asked its subscribers to discuss five key schools policies from the Conservative Party's manifesto.

Unsurprisingly, one of the issues readers felt most strongly about was grammar schools (Q4), with more than 70 per cent disagreeing with plans to overturn the ban on new selective institutions. More than 50 per cent said their disagreement was “very strong”.

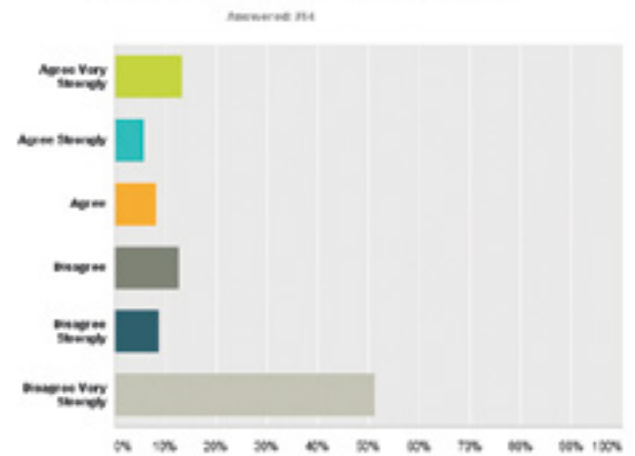
Other issues were slightly more polarising. When asked if they agreed with plans to have 75 per cent of pupils studying the EBacc subjects at GCSE by 2022, more than 60 per cent disagreed to some degree, while just under 40 per cent agreed – though few agreed strongly or very strongly.

Plans for a non-degree apprenticeship route for teaching assistants to gain qualified teacher status won the support of more than 50 per cent of respondents, with more than 20 per cent either agreeing strongly or very strongly.

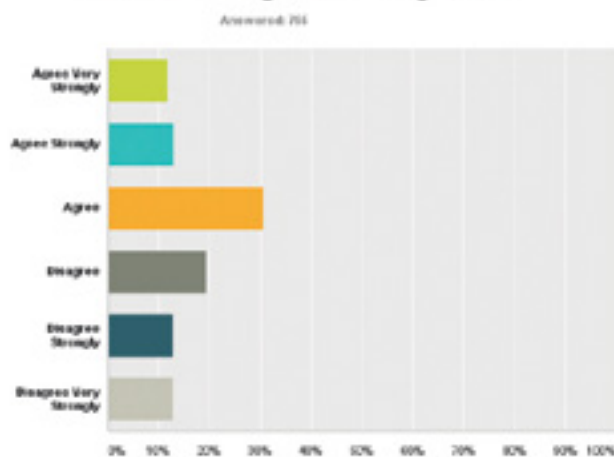
Q1 To have 75% of pupils studying the EBacc subjects at GCSE by 2022



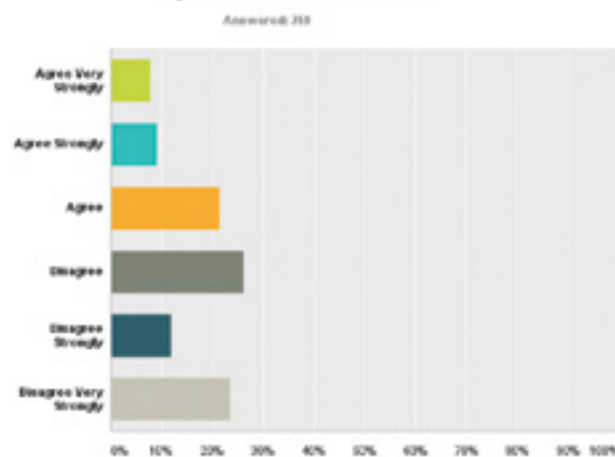
Q4 Overturn the ban on selective schools



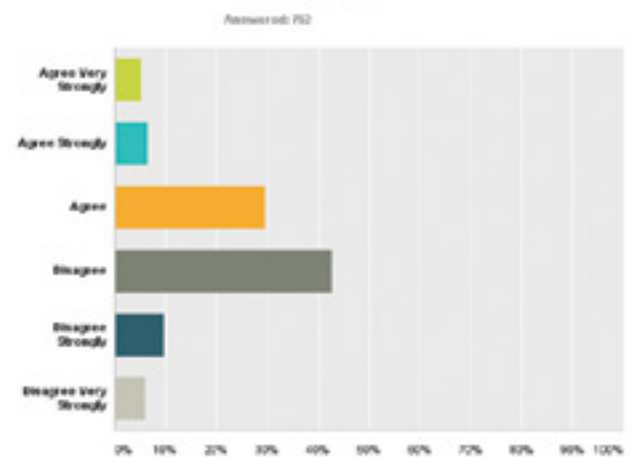
Q5 Create an apprenticeship (non-degree) route for teaching assistants to gain QTS



Q6 Scrap universal infant lunches and provide breakfast instead



Q7 Prevent extra places in Ofsted grade 3 or 4 schools



# Lib Dems pledge £7bn education s

The Liberal Democrats have proposed significant spending rises for both schools and skills in their manifesto, along with plans to boost apprenticeships and a bid to give councils more powers to create school places.

The party wants to spend an additional £7 billion on schools and colleges between 2018 and 2022, protecting per-pupil funding in “real-terms”.

They will also seek to double the number of businesses that hire apprentices, and repeal the rule which requires all new schools to be free schools, giving councils “clear responsibility” for local school places planning.

The commitment to apprentices means the party would be aiming to have more than 380,000 firms hire apprentices over a 12-month period. In February, the government said it expected 190,153 companies to recruit in the coming year.

The Liberal Democrats’ spokesperson said the party would achieve its target in part by boosting the numbers of apprenticeships in “new sectors of our economy, like creative and digital industries”.

The most recent government figures showed that 22,980 employers posted vacancies between last August and March this year – which was actually down by 810 from the same period the previous year.

The total number of employers that posted vacancies over the whole of 2015/16 was 37,560.

The manifesto also sets out plans to allow councils to open new maintained schools.

Under the party’s proposals for driving up school standards, all capital money for new school places will be devolved to town halls, with the party pledging to ensure new schools are built in areas where there is a need for extra places.

The Liberal Democrats have also set out plans to help teachers. Like Labour, they

would end the one per cent cap on rises in teachers’ pay, and protect school funding in real-terms.

But the party is also proposing much more detailed policies in relation to teacher development, including an entitlement to 25 hours of high-quality professional development for all teachers by 2020, rising to 50 hours by 2025.

They will also set up an independent Education Standards Authority, which would be responsible for phasing in and resourcing future policy changes in consultation with education professionals.

The authority would also be responsible for a new curriculum entitlement proposed by the party. This would be a “slimmed-down core national curriculum”, which would be taught in all state-funded schools and include PSHE and age-appropriate SRE.

The party also plans to invest £7 billion “in our schools and colleges”, including £3.3 billion to protect per-pupil funding in real terms and £630 million to extend the same protection to colleges.

The Lib Dems also plan to spend up to £355 million to ensure that no school loses out as a result of the new national funding formula and up to £125 million a year to protect the pupil premium in real terms.

Between 2018 and 2022, the party would also spend £165 million on CPD for teachers and more than £2.5 billion to extend universal free meals to all primary pupils.

The party has also pledged to develop national colleges as “national centres of expertise for key sectors, such as renewable energy” and aim to meet all basic skills needs including literacy, numeracy and digital skills by 2030.

The Lib Dems also want to boost the number of apprentices from black and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds and ensure gender balance across industry sectors, encouraging underrepresented groups to apply.



## SARAH OLNEY

Liberal Democrat education spokesperson writes for *Schools Week* and *FE Week*



Education is at the heart of giving our children the best possible start in life and the opportunity to achieve anything they set their mind to. Good, well-funded schools are a vital part of the fairer society we want to build, where a child’s life chances aren’t determined by the circumstances of their birth.

That’s why the Liberal Democrats will invest an extra £7 billion in our schools and colleges over the next parliament, protecting funding per pupil in real terms.

Our party has always made schools a priority. In coalition government, we fought to protect schools funding and introduced the £2.5 billion-a-year pupil premium, which gives schools extra money to support the most disadvantaged pupils.

I’m proud of the progress we made in narrowing the attainment gap between pupils from different backgrounds. But there are still huge challenges facing our education system.

A rising population is placing extra burdens on our schools, and the wealth of a child’s parents still plays far too great a

role in determining how well they’ll do.

But the Conservative government is not interested in helping schools and teachers to meet these challenges.

At a time when schools desperately need extra funding, they are cutting spending by £3 billion in real terms, amounting to eight per cent less per pupil.

Instead of giving schools the resources they need to teach every child properly, they are spending billions of pounds on divisive plans to open new grammars and free schools – schools that disproportionately benefit privileged children with wealthy parents.

And many schools across the country are set to be hit by additional, savage cuts when the national funding formula is introduced next year.

The Tory cuts are the worst our schools have faced in a generation, and have pushed our schools to crisis point. 72 per cent of headteachers warn that their schools’ budgets will be untenable by 2020.

Many are being forced to cut back on teaching staff, equipment and teacher



# Spending



PA/WIRE

training. Children are increasingly being taught in overcrowded classrooms by overworked and undervalued teachers.

If Theresa May gets a landslide on June 9, those cuts will continue and the crisis facing our schools will only get worse.

The Liberal Democrats want a brighter future for our young people. We will reverse the Conservatives' crippling cuts and give schools the extra funding necessary to make sure every child has the chance to succeed.

We have a fully costed plan to invest an extra £7 billion in schools and colleges over the next parliament. This will ensure that funding rises in line with both pupil numbers and inflation, as well as protecting the pupil premium in real terms. We'll also provide an extra £165 million for continuous professional development for teachers, and £1.26 billion to make sure that no school loses out from the national funding formula.

By plunging our schools into crisis, the Conservative government is putting every child's future at risk. This election is our chance to change the direction of our country.

Together, we can build a Britain where our children really can grow up to achieve all that we know they are capable of.

## Liberal Democrats education pledges

### Stop the education cuts – fair funding for all schools

- Reverse cuts to frontline school and college budgets, protecting per pupil funding in real terms
- Introduce a fairer national funding system with a protection for all schools
- Protect the pupil premium

### Teachers – our biggest asset in education

- End the one-per-cent cap on teachers' pay rises
- Guarantee that all teachers in state-funded schools will be fully qualified or working towards QTS from January 2019
- Introduce an entitlement to 25 hours per year of "high quality professional development" for all teachers by 2020, rising to 50 hours by 2025
- Support "proper long-term planning of initial teacher training places"
- Establish an independent "Education Standards Authority" to pilot, phase in and resource future policy changes
- Reform Ofsted inspections so they include a focus on longer-term outcomes, sustainable improvement, teacher workload, sickness and retention
- Support the establishment of a new, independent Foundation for Leadership in Education, working under the umbrella of the Chartered College of Teaching
- Continue to work with the Education Endowment Foundation

### Driving up school standards

- Give democratically accountable local authorities clear responsibility for planning local school places, and repeal the rule that all new state-funded schools must be free schools or academies
- Scrap the planned expansion of grammar schools and devolve all capital money for new school spaces to local authorities
- Allow Ofsted to inspect academy chains
- Rule out state-funded profit-making schools, and ensure new schools are built in areas where there is a need for new school places
- Ensure identification and support for SEND takes place "as early as possible"

### Curriculum and qualifications

- Introduce a curriculum entitlement – a "slimmed down core national curriculum", which will be taught in all state-funded schools, including PSHE and age-appropriate SRE
- Make the curriculum the responsibility of an

Educational Standards Authority

- Prioritise primary progress measures instead of floor thresholds and work with the profession to reform tests at 11
- Protect the availability of arts and creative subjects in the curriculum and remove barriers to pupils studying them
- Improve links between employers and schools, encouraging all schools to participate in employment and enterprise schemes
- Challenge gender stereotyping and early sexualisation, working with schools to promote positive body image and break down outdated perceptions of gender appropriateness of particular academic subjects
- Getting children and families ready to learn
- Ensure all teaching staff have the training to identify mental health issues and that schools provide immediate access for pupil support and counselling
- Make promoting wellbeing a statutory duty of a school and include in the Ofsted inspection framework
- Extend free school meals to all children in primary education and promote school breakfast clubs
- Ensure collaboration between education and family organisations to "improve the flow of helpful information between home and school without increasing teacher workload"
- Tackle bullying in schools including bullying on the basis of gender, sexuality, gender identity, or gender expression

### Lifelong opportunities to learn

- Aim to double the number of businesses which hire apprentices
- Develop national colleges as national centres of expertise for key sectors
- Work with the apprenticeship advisory group to increase the number of apprentices from BAME backgrounds, ensure gender balance across industry sectors, and encourage underrepresented groups to apply
- Identify and seek to solve skills gaps such as the lack of advanced technicians by expanding higher vocational training
- Ensure that all the receipts from the apprenticeship levy in England are spent on training, aiming to fund a wider range of types of training
- Aim to meet all basic skills needs including literacy, numeracy and digital skills by 2030
- Create individual accounts for funding adult and part-time learning and training, and provide for all adults individual access to all necessary career information, advice and guidance
- Facilitate across the UK an effective and comprehensive system for credit transfer and recognition of prior learning and qualifications

# FE Week



## Have the Conservatives turned their backs on supporting small businesses?

### EDITORIAL

The reader survey results are in, and perhaps surprisingly, the pledge that most unifies them is Labour's commitment to protect apprenticeship funding for small non-levy-paying employers.

The pledge comes after we reported extensively on the 'horror story' associated with small amounts and in many cases no non-levy funding being allocated to providers.

Conversely, the Conservative manifesto makes no reference to supporting non-levy employers, despite a section on 'backing small businesses.'

It seems to me that this is a major gap in

the Conservatives' plans, coming just a few days after the launch of an apprenticeship levy that excludes 98 percent of employers – the small ones.

Some might argue the 90 per cent non-levy subsidy is 'backing small businesses', but if a provider has no allocation then the level of subsidy is in fact zero per cent.

Sticking to the topic of apprenticeships, I am also suspicious of the Conservative

manifesto commitment to subsidise bus and train fares for apprentices.

At no point has the Department for Education or skills minister floated the idea, so why wait for a snap election? Could it simply be politicking – after Labour included the same pledge in a draft but failed to include it in the final version?

**Nick Linford** @nicklinford

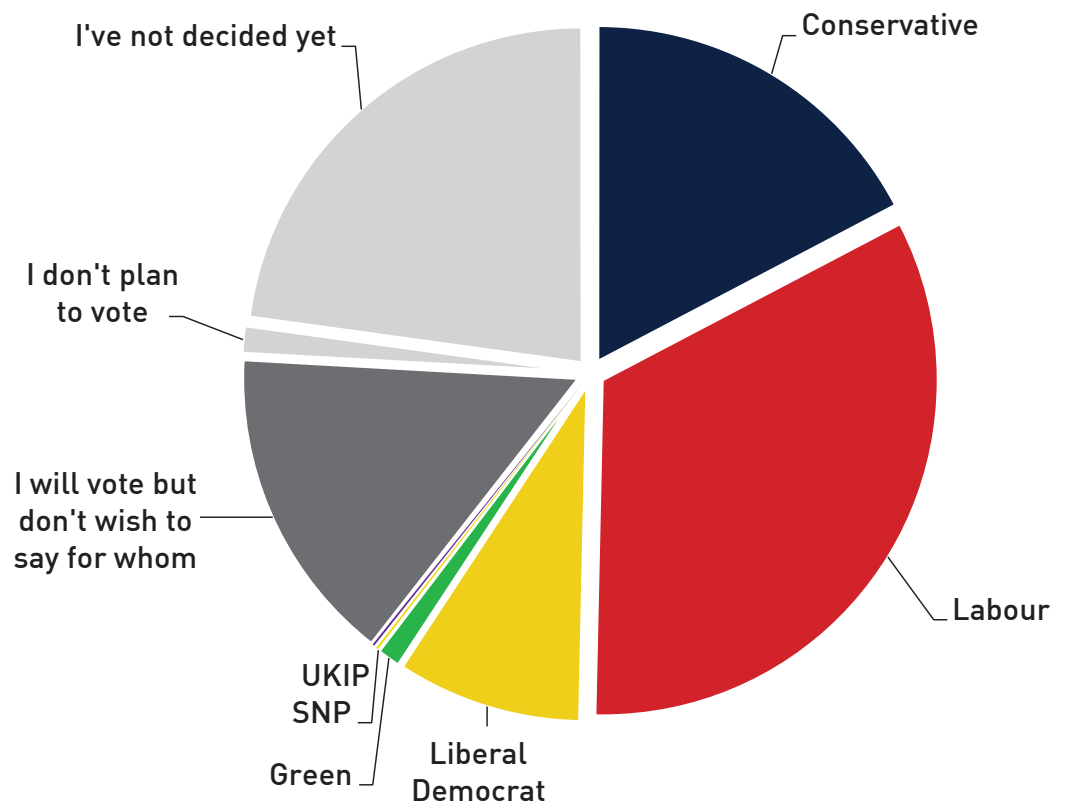
Policy	Scrap fees and loans in further education by doubling AEB funding	Reintroduce the 16-19 Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)	Abandon plans for Institutes of Technology and use funding for more teachers	Protect £440m of apprenticeship funding for small (non-levy-paying) employers	Set a target that all FE teaching staff have a teaching qualification within five years	Total
Average popularity out of 5	3.53	3.15	3.39	4.06	3.88	3.60

Policy	Continue with the target of 3m apprenticeship starts by 2020	Allow employers to use their levy to pay apprentices' wages	Replace vocational qualifications with T-levels that have 50% more teaching time	Introduce significantly discounted bus and train travel for young apprentices	Double the Immigration Skills Charge to £2,000 to reinvest in FE and skills	Total
Average popularity out of 5	3.21	2.18	2.43	3.83	2.90	2.91

Policies in order of popularity

Policy	Average popularity out of 5
Protect £440m of apprenticeship funding for small (non-levy-paying) employers	4.06
Set a target that all FE teaching staff have a teaching qualification within five years	3.88
Introduce significantly discounted bus and train travel for young apprentices	3.83
Scrap fees and loans in further education by doubling AEB funding	3.53
Abandon plans for Institutes of Technology and use funding for more teachers	3.39
Continue with the target of 3m apprenticeship starts by 2020	3.21
Reintroduce the 16-19 Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)	3.15
Double the Immigration Skills Charge to £2,000 to reinvest in FE and skills	2.90
Replace vocational qualifications with T-levels that have 50% more teaching time	2.43
Allow employers to use their levy to pay apprentices' wages	2.18

Which party will you vote for on June 8th in the General Election?





# Manifesto pledge-o-meter results in full

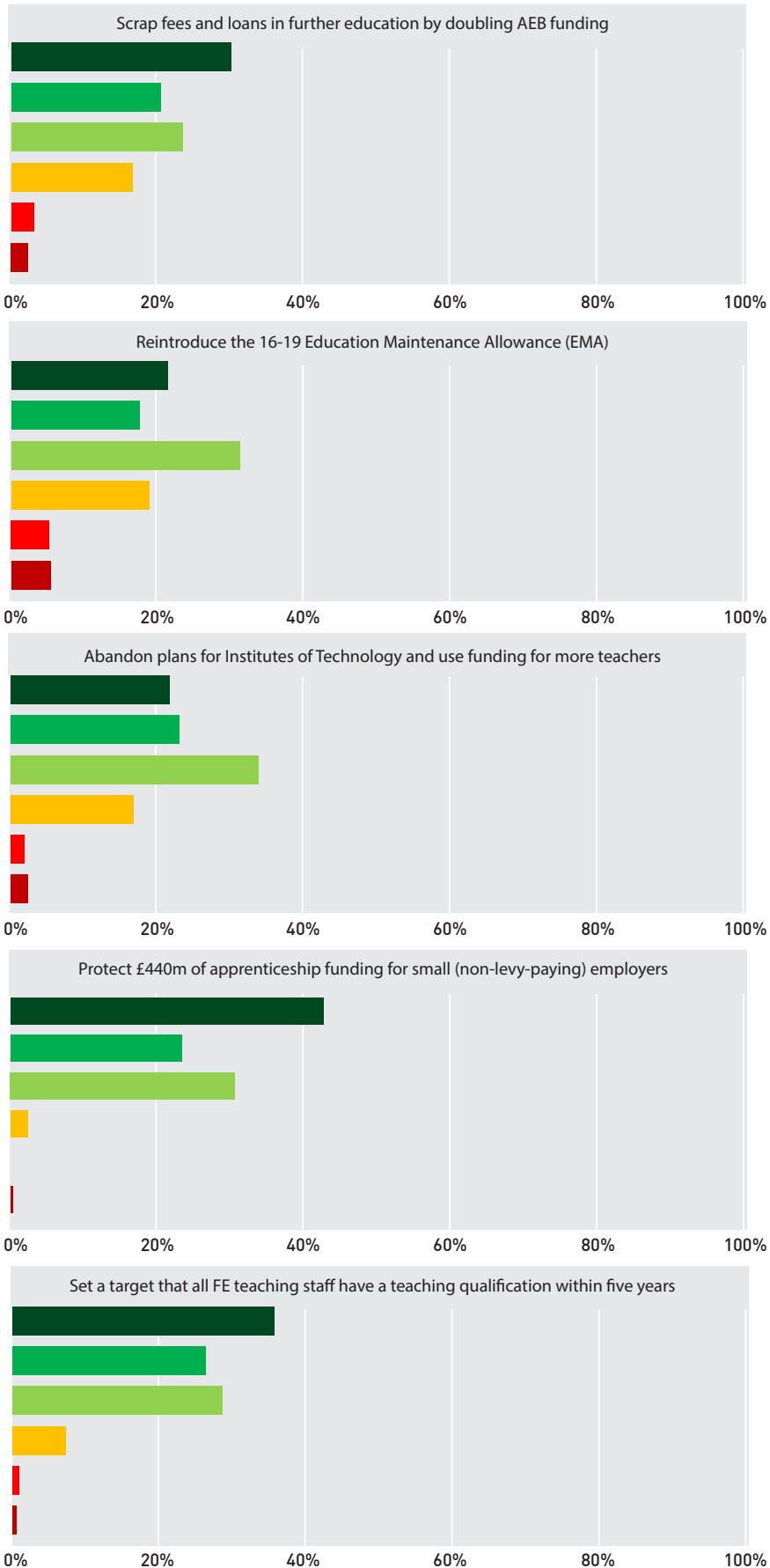
On Monday May 22 we sent out an online survey to our readers, and over the course of the day 698 responded. Below are their views on the main five Labour and Conservative pledges.

Apprenticeship funding protection for SMEs promised by the Labour party proved on average most popular, whereas allowing employers to use their levy to pay apprentice wages proved least popular.

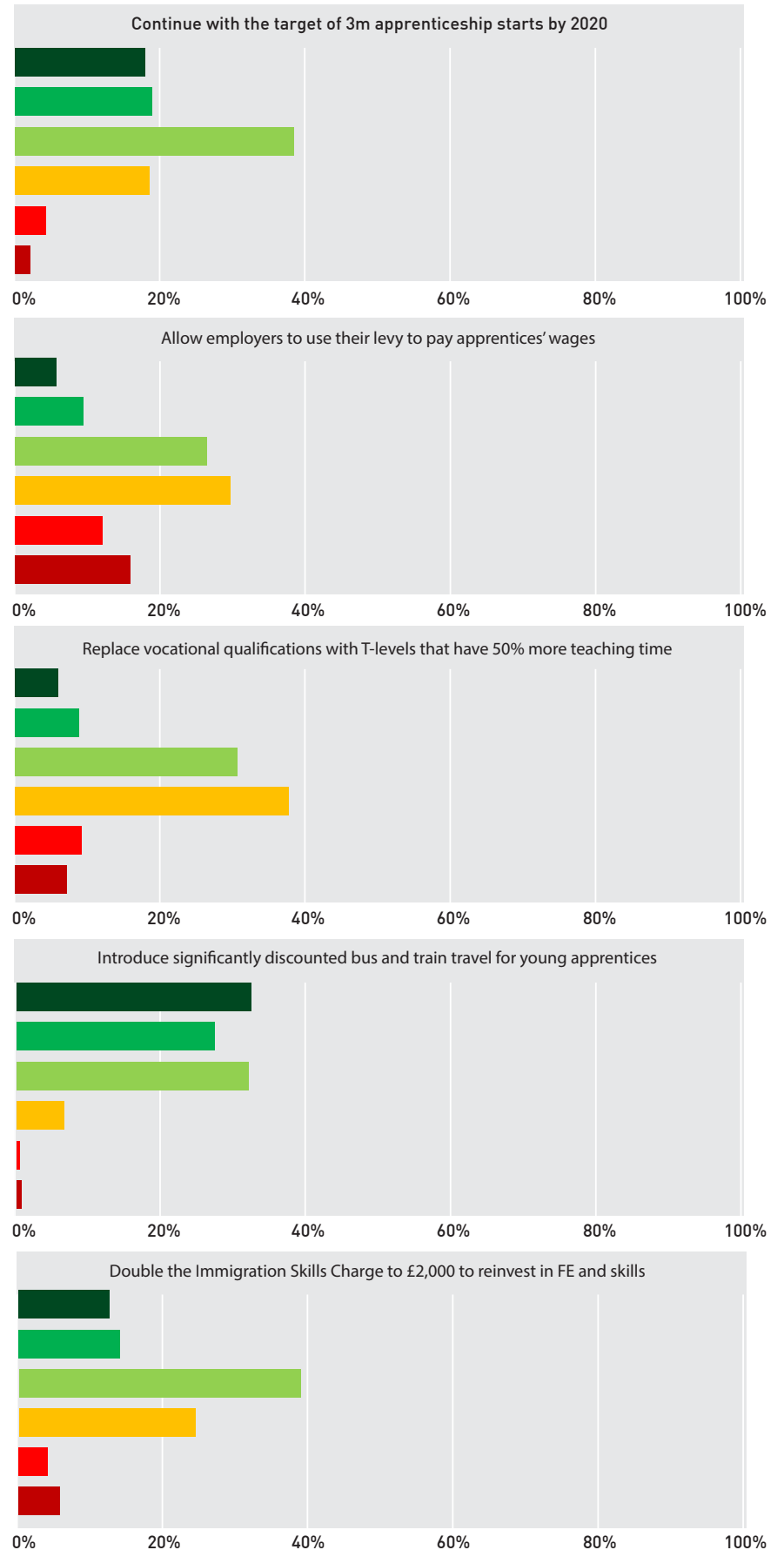
The table on the bottom left of page 16 shows Labour pledges topping the table in terms of popularity, while the bottom spots are occupied by Conservative policy pledges.

Key to survey responses			
Agree very strongly	Disagree	Disagree strongly	Disagree very strongly
Agree strongly			
Agree			

## Labour



## Conservative



## SCHOOLSWEEK

## EDITOR'S COMMENT

## What was the verdict of the Schools Week readers?

When it comes to Schools Week readers it turns out that as much divides us and joins us.

The readers' poll showed a clear preference for Labour, with just over 50 per cent of survey respondents saying that is who they would vote for. But on matters of actual policy, it turns out things are not so clear cut.

Take, for example, the Conservative proposal to introduce a teaching apprenticeship route for teaching assistants to gain qualified teacher status. When we first reported on this idea, over a year ago now, the resistance from readers was palpable. It probably didn't help that we labelled it as a "no-degree" route (which it is) as there is a certain attachment to teaching as a graduate profession. The word "apprenticeship", however, didn't seem to do the route any favours either. More commonly associated with manual work, readers seemed concerned their job was being seen as akin to a thing you could learn from a simple guide book.

Yet, the poll suggests there is greater agreement with teaching apprenticeships than disagreement (around 55 per cent were in favour). It's not a romping victory, but it feels like a sea-change from where attitudes were at a year ago. Could it be that the apprenticeship tax now faced by schools is making people look more favourably at recouping the cost by actually hiring apprentices? We may not like the tax, but that's what it was designed to do.

On the other hand, despite Labour's overall popularity, a few of their policies have fallen flat. Free lunches for all primary children is marginally more disliked than liked, and the abandoning of baseline tests is also close to fifty-fifty either way, although a surge of people

agreeing strongly with the policy tipped the balance and meant that, overall, more people were in favour.

While none of the Conservative policies were a rip-roaring success a few Labour ones appear beloved. A consultation on teacher sabbaticals had almost universal thumbs-up – although one wonders how the teacher shortage

**“ One wonders how the teacher shortage would be helped by people popping off to a beach for a year? ”**

would be helped by people popping off to a beach for a year?

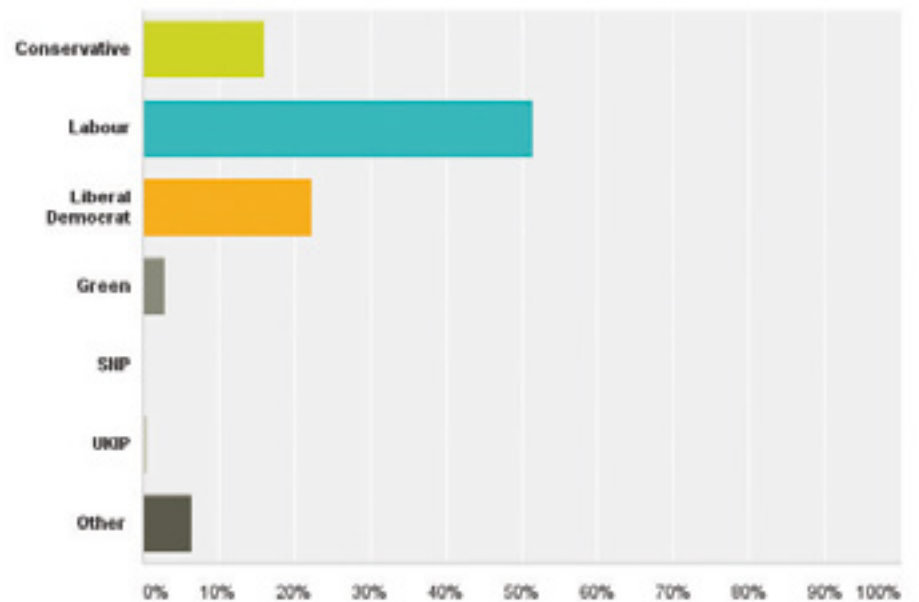
Labour's policy for bringing academies into line with national pay scales also had almost universal agreement – only around 18 per cent of people disagreed. The government has always maintained that academy pay flexibility



**Laura McInerney**  
@miss\_mcinerney

### Q13 Which party will you vote for on June 8th in the General Election

Answered: 713



was good for teachers, as it meant the best would get paid more. Yet, it seems, the profession would rather have unity. Given the strength of sentiment it is worth Labour pushing this point more strongly in their campaign.

Reducing class sizes for under 7s also polled strongly. This is unsurprising, as it's one of the few election issues which has consistently shown to be liked by voters over the years.

Grammar schools, on the other hand, remain massively unpopular among our readers. Over 50 per cent said they strongly disagreed with overturning the ban on more selective schools. Compared to around 28 per cent who agreed with the policy, even just marginally.

One oddity: the split on grammars is not obviously between Conservative and Labour voters. That is, people who agreed with grammars were not particularly likely to be blue over red. Many people who said they were voting Conservative vehemently disagreed with grammars. Likewise, lots of the strongly agrees came from people voting Labour. This is a deeply divisive issue in

more ways than one. If implemented, the ructions are likely to be loud.

What is most heartening, perhaps, is that Schools Week readers are as diverse as first envisaged when starting the paper. We've never believed that everyone has to think the same in order that education improves. In fact, it's only by us all looking at a variety of policies and considering the implications that the community can deliver for our 8 million pupils.

You may also be interested to know

**“ It's not a romping victory, but it feels like a sea-change ”**

that in terms of job role of the average reader taking the survey, you were also very diverse. Around 20 per cent are teachers, 20 per cent senior leaders, just over 20 per cent are heads, around 5 per cent CEOs, 10 per cent governors and a whole heap of others: local authority workers, social enterprise and policy makers.

Hence, there is much that divides us. But I am glad that you join us each week for more political analysis. We enjoy having you here.



## ED CADWALLADER

Consultant, Roots School Improvement

# A complacent answer to a system in crisis

The education sector is facing many urgent crises which simply aren't addressed by this lazy Tory manifesto, says Ed Cadwallader

When they came to power in 2010, David Cameron's Conservatives said they wanted to address a sector that, in their view, was complacent about how much it had improved and needed more.

In 2017 these roles are reversed. Our school system is forced to face constant crises with dwindling resources and Theresa May's Conservatives have released a manifesto containing lazy and inadequate responses to the sector's problems – and creating a few more of its own.

Probably the most pressing issue is the shortage of school places, which gets worse by tens of thousands each year. The Conservatives have promised a hundred new free schools every year, and will doggedly quote numbers of schools built, but it is numbers of places and location that's critical. A new primary with a distinctive ethos might be nice, but if the nearby secondaries are bursting at their decrepit seams, it raises questions.

Another horseman that stalks headteachers' nightmares is recruitment and the tone of the manifesto suggests tweaks, not a major rethink, is necessary.

Money is available for teacher trainee bursaries and, possibly, loan relief, but it ignores the broader question of why graduates would choose to enter or stay in a profession whose demands are wildly out of sync with its rewards.

More recruitment could come through an apprenticeship programme, which is mentioned in the manifesto and would allow teaching assistants to attain QTS, though that would entail dropping the requirement for a degree, a notion that sits oddly with attempts to boost the status of the profession.

Having teachers without degrees also jars with noises made about a knowledge-based curriculum. It's here that the lack of coherence is most evident: key stage 3 may or may not be getting a new national test that could whip innovation for years 7 to 9 back into accountability-driven conformity.

Meanwhile money will be made available for curriculum innovation but how that will be shared is unclear, as is the broader question of whether multi-academy trusts will have a duty to work together.

The expected centrepiece of the whole education policy – the removal of the ban on new grammar schools – confirms that this is a government that thinks of education as an issue to be messaged rather than a system in which policies have real consequences. All of the hard questions, such as whether the party will allow the conversion of existing schools, or where the responsibility to ensure socially diverse intakes, are ignored.

We receive only a commitment to "allowing pupils to join at other ages as well as eleven", which is designed more to refute the accusation that the 11-plus is a permanent marker of failure than to provide actual opportunities for mobility, given the tiny number of places that will be created by children leaving grammars midway through their school careers.

## The Conservatives have released a manifesto containing lazy and inadequate responses to the sector's problems

Airy hand-waving is also what underpins ideas for school improvement – especially the mandate that independent schools and universities will sponsor schools. These are both ideas from the 'Schools that work for everyone' consultation, which hasn't yet been released, possibly because its proposals are backed by no-one. Universities are openly telling us they lack the expertise to improve schools.

Only someone with the most cursory acquaintance with the education system could call this a strong and stable set of policies. It is a complacent answer to a system in crisis.



## HEATH MONK

Executive director, Schools of King Edward VI, Birmingham

# We still need more detail on grammars

Selective education is dominating the debate over the Conservative manifesto, but policy details are thin on the ground, says Heath Monk

The end of the ban on new selective schools is likely to be the most divisive and controversial of the policies set out in the Conservative manifesto on education. However, there is still no more detail than was set out in the green paper last September.

Does this portend a wholesale return to the 11+ (and the 12+, 13+ and 14+), with a "grammar school in every town" or are the ambitions more modest? How far will proposals go in seeking to make existing selective schools more accessible to disadvantaged students, as we have done in the King Edward VI schools in Birmingham? A manifesto commitment prevents opposition from the House of Lords, but to what end?

Elsewhere, the manifesto makes some small steps forward in addressing major problems in funding and recruitment. The expensive folly of universal infant free school meals is removed, there is some additional money to smooth the introduction of the National Funding Formula, and there is a welcome nod to the recruitment crisis in the shape of student loan forgiveness for serving teachers.

Whether all of this is too little too late to support a school system struggling to cope with reduced funding, a shortage of teachers, shifting accountability, dizzying curriculum reform and the stifling increase of bureaucratic oversight is another matter.

However, we are at least a long way from the ridiculous and dangerous hubris of the 'Educational Excellence Everywhere' proposals published by Nicky Morgan just over a year ago. In those pre-Brexit months, we saw an endless succession of gaffes and U-turns from the Department for Education.

Policy was out of control with a secretary of state who was out of her depth and doubling down on some of the worst excesses of the Gove era. From universal forced academisation to the imposition

of the 90 per cent EBacc target and the wholesale and poorly considered reforms of initial teacher training, many policies have, happily, been toned down or quietly shelved.

## The smart money suggests that Justine Greening will be moved on

The implementation of a policy is as important as the policy itself. Even the most fervent supporter of Michael Gove's reforms cannot deny that his were implemented haphazardly and without thorough planning. That has had a cost in terms of the pressure and workload placed on school leaders and teachers – pressure that is at the root of the significant recruitment problems faced today.

The smart money suggests that Justine Greening will be moved on after the election, in part due to her lukewarm support for selective schools. But I think that would be a mistake. She has demonstrated a measured and practical approach that is in marked contrast to her predecessors and she has gone some way to re-engaging the teaching profession.

The next few years promise to be very challenging for schools. The reforms to GCSEs and A-levels rumble on, with their full impact yet to be seen. Key stage 2 SATs remain a mess. Oversight of Academies and MATs needs to be addressed. Teachers need to be recruited and, more importantly, retained. Schools need to be funded fairly and in line with the increased government-imposed pressures and rising student population.

These challenges require a steady hand. What we need is not ideological warfare (surely we've had enough of that), but managerial competence. Whether we'll get it will become clearer in the days and months following the general election.

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