

#YourChoice



2019 General Election
Our schools.
Their future.
Your choice.

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NAHT is at the forefront of education policy, representing the views of 30,000 school leaders as they strive to deliver a world-class education to the nation's children and young people.

Whatever the challenges or opportunities ahead of us, we can be certain that investing in future generations will be the best way to guarantee our future success.

While Brexit will undoubtedly be at the forefront of people's minds during this election, there are important domestic matters to consider too. We know that in 2017 education was a defining doorstep issue and it is destined to be so again 2019. Schools and colleges face a number of pressing challenges and therefore this will be a vital election for education.

NAHT has identified five priorities, which describe the kind of education system we would like to see; a system that meets the needs of all those who work and learn within it.

We are urging all political parties and candidates to sign up to this vision for education and to place these priorities at the heart of their plans for government after the 2019 General Election.

Our five election priorities

1. **A fully and fairly funded education system** where the real-terms cuts since 2010 are reversed and there's guaranteed long term investment.
2. **Great teachers and leaders in every class and every school** with the support, development and reward to sustain a career in education.
3. **Proportionate, reliable and fair inspection** that schools and parents can have confidence in.
4. **A broad and balanced curriculum available to all pupils** that gives children and young people different ways to show what they can do and properly prepares them for life.
5. **Timely and effective support from the services that children and families rely on** so that all pupils get the help they need and achieve their potential.



1. Funding



A fully and fairly funded education system where the real-terms cuts since 2010 are reversed and there's guaranteed long term investment.

School budgets are still at breaking point. Real-terms cuts to budgets have meant that children and their families have seen class sizes soar, teaching assistants laid off, subjects dropped, resources diminished and buildings fall into disrepair.

The current government has promised a three-year phased increase in funding, but analysis by expert bodies such as the Institute for Fiscal Studies shows that this will only return school budgets to 2009-10 levels. This represents an unprecedented 13-year funding freeze in real terms. It is obvious how much pressure this puts on schools' best efforts to maintain standards and care for pupils.

In addition, due to the way the government intends to distribute the funding, there will inevitably be winners and losers. A large proportion of schools will only receive a 1.8% increase in their budget next year, meaning that many will be no better off in real terms.

Given the increasing demands on schools and colleges, and the vital role they play in society, we urgently need a funding settlement that commits to year-on-year real-terms funding increases for all schools to support the education of the nation's young people in these uncertain times. Our young people need the best possible education to prepare them to meet the future with confidence.

Alongside such investment in *all* our schools and colleges, NAHT believes there are three key areas that all parties should urgently address when it comes to education spending:

- **High needs funding** – As our Empty Promises report identified, a resolution to the crisis in funding for children with special educational needs and /or disabilities is urgently needed, alongside properly funded, accessible and available health, social and therapeutic services to support pupils.
- **Maintained nursery schools** - The evidence shows that intervening in the early years of a child's life is the most effective way to improve their life chances, particularly if they are from disadvantaged backgrounds. Funding for early years education (including safeguarding and expanding maintained nursery schools) must be sufficient.
- **Small and rural schools** – these schools have been hit particularly hard during the funding crisis. They play a vital role in their local communities and must be protected.

While more is known about the current government's plans for education funding, we invite all parties to deliver a funding settlement that goes beyond what is currently on offer, to guarantee the stability and quality of schools and colleges in the long term.



2. Recruitment and retention



Great teachers and leaders in every class and every school with the support, development and reward to sustain a career in education.

NAHT's Leaky Pipeline recruitment survey confirmed the scale of the recruitment challenge, with members reporting that they had struggled or failed altogether to recruit posts in 76% of cases. The DfE's own data paints a bleak picture, with recruitment targets for initial teacher training missed for seven consecutive years and a third of teachers leaving the profession within five years.

Our pupils deserve the best teachers, motivated and enthused to work. We cannot address this challenge without tackling the issue of workload in schools, both in terms of long working hours (54 hours a week for teachers and 60 for school leaders) and the pressure of a punitive accountability system where one set of results or one Ofsted visit can cut short a career.

Changes to national education policy can be a significant driver of increased workload. Future governments must commit to reducing workload for all school staff and provide stability in the education system to support this.

While pay and conditions of service are not the only means to attract and retain teachers, they provide a clear message about the status of the profession, and that message has been compromised by year on year, real-terms pay cuts since 2010. We need to position teaching as a compelling professional choice for recent graduates and career-changers, with the pay, progression, development and conditions to sustain great teachers over a decades-long career in our schools and colleges. The profession needs a full and complete review of pay scales if we are to meet the recruitment and retention challenges facing us.

The government's model for planning and allocating initial teacher training places across the country is flawed: it fails to take into account regional shortages and the increasing number of teachers teaching a subject they are not qualified in. The model must be revised to address the challenges we are facing. With bursaries in limited subjects, others contemplating the profession face the prospect of student loan debt that will probably never be repaid. With both current challenges and the number of European nationals coming to train and teach in our schools plummeting there is a risk that Brexit could further undermine the bank of skilled teachers in the nation's classrooms.

Now is the time to create a positive proposition for a career in teaching that rivals other professions such as law, medicine, accountancy and engineering.

3. Accountability



Proportionate, reliable and fair inspection that schools and parents can have confidence in.

Standards in education in this country have transformed over the last twenty-five years and the majority of schools are now good or better. Inspection has contributed to this improvement, by identifying failure in the system and prompting action to improve. However, while inspection continues to have a positive impact by identifying failures in the very small fraction of schools where it genuinely exists, inspection is having a far greater negative impact in the vast majority of schools that are neither struggling nor failing and overall this is doing more harm than good.

Inspection can help lift a system to good but it cannot push it on to great. It can be an effective tool for driving compliance with minimum standards, but it is poor at unleashing potential in schools and colleges. If we want an education system to rival the best in the world then we need to strike a new balance between holding schools to account and helping them to improve.

A reformed inspectorate should focus its efforts where it can make the biggest difference, by providing a stronger diagnostic insight into schools that are struggling, to help them improve more rapidly. All other schools, including those currently judged outstanding, should receive a regular light-touch health-check, to ensure a good standard of education is maintained and that safeguarding remains effective. The sector needs a new way to identify excellent practice for itself, to foster evidence-based collaboration between all school types in the best interests of pupils.

Comparing pupil performance data between schools in different contexts has been proven to be inherently unreliable, yet each year league tables are produced that rank schools using precisely this measure and which have, until now, heavily influenced judgements of school effectiveness by the inspectorate and parents.

Data should only ever be a starting point in a conversation about school standards and effectiveness. Statutory tests and exams will never be able to capture all aspects of a young person's progress or a school's success. NAHT's Accountability Commission proposed that comparative performance data, using families of schools, should be used by the inspectorate to inform discussions around effectiveness, to help level the playing field between schools.

Further changes to structures, like the expansion of grammar schools, drive perverse incentives, gaming and a range of unintended consequences right across the school system. The overwhelming weight of evidence demonstrates that academic selection at eleven makes outcomes worse, not better, for the majority of children in an area.

4. Curriculum



A broad and balanced curriculum available to all pupils that gives children and young people different ways to show what they can do and properly prepares them for life.

Schools should have the freedom to determine the right curriculum to engage, inspire and motivate all learners. This range of subjects and opportunities must be inclusive and support the learning, progress and success of all pupils. Currently, however, it is distorted and restricted by the external pressures of testing, examinations and accountability. This must change and schools should be enabled to put the needs of their pupils first.

In experiencing a broad and balanced curriculum all pupils should be given opportunities to develop their skills in English, maths and science, as well as their knowledge and understanding of the world they live in, the environment, different religions and cultures, a foreign language, technology, computing, music and the creative arts and sport. Personal, Social, Health and Economic education (PSHE) is a vital part of this mix.

A broad and balanced curriculum promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils and prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life. Schools must have the curriculum time and resources to provide this aspect of pupils' learning.

In primary schools, any new government must create a more proportionate system, reducing the number of high stakes tests, ensuring that the progress of all pupils is valued. The high stakes nature of tests in English and maths means other subjects are being squeezed out of the school day.

Secondary schools must be freed from the arbitrary target that 90% of pupils take EBacc subjects as those subjects currently included in the EBacc are not the only subjects which are rigorous, demanding and offer preparation for life.

Technical and vocational qualifications should have the same worth as general qualifications and young people should not be faced with a blunt choice between an academic and a vocational or technical route post 16.

If schools are to develop a curriculum to enable all pupils to be successful, they need a flexible qualification framework with widely available formal qualifications suitable for all learners.

5. Support and safeguarding



Timely and effective support from the services that children and families rely on so that all pupils get the help they need and achieve their potential.

Schools are most successful as places of learning when they work together with high-quality social care, health and other services to meet pupils' needs. Crucially, those services need to be available and accessible to offer the support, treatment and intervention that children and young people need.

NAHT would like to see a commitment to prioritise funding for all services which supports children and young people, including social care and health. Present funding levels are not sufficient to meet the needs of all pupils and capacity must be increased to meet the growing demand and to reduce waiting times for support and help.

Mental health plays a fundamental role in pupils' well-being and educational attainment and poor mental health is a significant barrier to learning. The vital role for schools is to contribute significantly to promoting good mental and emotional well-being amongst pupils of all ages.

Current plans for mental health provision for children and young people fail to recognise and provide the scale of urgent improvements and resourcing needed for mental health services across the country. NAHT believes that any new government must address this as a matter of urgency.

Schools play an incredibly important role in the safeguarding of children and young people. They are uniquely placed to identify issues, refer concerns and promote the overall safety and welfare of their school population. Schools need sufficient children's social care services to be available to offer the support and intervention that a wide range of pupils need. All children deserve timely and high-quality support when they need it; this should not be a postcode lottery.

Local authorities have faced an unprecedented surge in demand for children's social care support over recent years, which is showing little sign of abating. The huge financial pressures local authorities are under, coupled with the spike in demand for child protection support, mean the limited resources they have available are increasingly being taken up with the provision of urgent help for children and families already at crisis point. This is leaving very little to invest in early intervention.

Support for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) must be properly funded and resourced. Where a pupil has an education, health and care plan (EHCP), all of the relevant agencies must be enabled to meet their identified needs in full and without delay. A new government should urgently address the lack of access schools have to dedicated support services especially educational psychologists and speech and language therapists.

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NAHT's focus is to improve schools for everyone. To do this, we need to create the conditions that will see school leaders, their teams and their pupils achieve success and fulfil their potential.

A general election in 2019 presents the UK with an opportunity to debate and discuss the kind of education system that is required in the 21st century.

Radical new policies, designed to be eye-catching on the campaign trail, may not necessarily be the best strategies for the long-term.

Guaranteeing enough money for schools, providing enough well-qualified teachers, creating an inspection system that is fair to both schools and pupils, offering a broad curriculum and delivering access to dedicated support services for those that need them are the fundamentals of a successful system.

We encourage all parties and their candidates to engage with us, to put education at the centre of their campaigns, and to offer voters a well thought out and fully funded agenda for schools, colleges and young people.

To discuss NAHT's five priorities for education, please contact policy@naht.org.uk.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'P Whiteman', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke at the end.

Paul Whiteman
NAHT general secretary

NAHT is at the forefront of education policy, representing the views of 30,000 school leaders as they strive to deliver a world-class education to the nation's children.

We have identified **our five key priorities for education** and urge all political parties to place these at the front of their 2019 General Election manifesto for education.

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For more information and to find out how you can get involved, visit naht.org.uk/yourchoice

