



The Centre
for Education
& Youth

A hand in a red and white striped sleeve is shown putting a white ballot into a brown ballot box. The background is a white brick wall.

The Centre for Education and Youth welcomes the new Labour Government

Teacher recruitment and retention

Jenny Griffiths, Head of Research

The Labour Government's commitment to recruiting an additional 6,500 teachers is hugely welcome, as is the focus on the importance of qualified teacher status. We need to revitalise teaching as an attractive professional career and a first priority will be to respond to the School Teachers Review Body (STRB) recommendations on pay to give schools certainty over their costs for the next year. Looking at teachers' pay and progression and how it relates to long-term retention is central to ensuring that teaching is an attractive and sustainable career option, as is acknowledging the crucial role of support staff. We recognise the complexities of funding and the competition of alternative career paths, particularly in shortage subjects, and welcome the new sense of collaboration with school leaders and teachers, and support staff in addressing these issues for the long-term sustainability of the teaching profession.



Assessment and accountability

Róisín Killick, Co-CEO

The education sector's accountability system has faced increased scrutiny and growing calls for reform in recent years, due to its high-stakes nature and the pressure that this puts on the profession and young people. Within a system that is already calling out for reform to attract and retain staff, the need to revisit the approach to both assessment and accountability is clear. Labour's report card system could be seen as a sign that there is an appetite for change that supports

schools and relieves the huge pressure currently placed on school leaders.

At CfEY, we welcome the attention to attendance and "off-rolling" in particular as a focus of the new government, given the long-term and disproportional impact of exclusions on the most vulnerable young people within our society; as explored in depth by our partners in the [Excluded Lives Team](#). The focus of any accountability system drives the focus of those within it, and school staff need to be able to serve their communities within a system that does not offer perverse incentives.

Curriculum and skills

Baz Ramaiah, Head of Policy

Labour's promise of an 'expert-led' curriculum review recalls Scotland's 2003 national consultation on the purpose of education that led to the country's new Curriculum for Excellence. However, [as we have long argued](#), a key question for this review will be who is consulted. The government must draw on a broad range of voices that includes young people of a range of ages and from marginalised backgrounds. This should include those with SEND and those from global majority ethnic backgrounds, who the curriculum often fails to represent or accommodate.

Either way, Labour must not fall into one of the traps its manifesto suggests it is vulnerable to - treating a national curriculum as exhausting everything that young people should learn and do in schools. As we concluded from our extensive review of evidence on curriculum and assessment '[Balancing Act](#)', it is vital that schools are supported to teach a standardised common core of knowledge and skills but are able to maintain a minimum of 20% space in the curriculum to teach knowledge and skills that are tailored to the needs and interests of the communities they are part of.

Finally, in line with Labour's overarching strategy to see all strands of the public sector engaged in supporting economic growth, it is also important for the new government to think about how education relates to industrial strategy and the economy more broadly. We commend the guarantee of training and apprenticeships for 18-21 year olds, for example, though it is vital this is conducted with an emphasis on [reducing equality gaps](#), ensuring all young people have fair access to employment opportunities.

The UK's stagnant economic productivity is at least in part a consequence of low investment in skills among employers - especially investment in higher technical skills. As we recommended in our [research for the Skills Commission](#) on Higher Technical Qualification, it is vital that the government invests in social messaging and training of post-16 careers advisers so that young people have a better understanding of vocational and technical qualifications routes, which will supply the skills for a greener, more automated (and hopefully more productive) economy that our country will develop in the coming decades.



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Baz Ramaiah
Head of Policy, The Centre for Education and Youth

Cultural education

Simon Lam, Associate

The Labour government's manifesto promises to support creative subject study up to age 16 and launching a national music education network are small but constructive steps towards a more inclusive and well-rounded education for all our young people. However, the fact remains that access to culture and the arts has become increasingly exclusive for the most well-off in our country, and this chronic disparity requires bolder action to equalise opportunities.

Our [2024 Report Card](#) with The Cultural Learning Alliance captures the mismatch between the high demand for arts subjects among young people, parents and industry and the massively marginalised role that arts subjects now play in our secondary schools. Going forward, I hope Labour will deliver change by integrating education as much as possible with the creative industries and cultural institutions, and ensuring that creative provision is ringfenced for schools, especially in the most underserved communities. This will make good on their mission to break down barriers to opportunity and ensure there is no class ceiling on the ambitions of young people in Britain.



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Simon Lam
Associate, The Centre for Education and Youth



“While the new government has been less forthcoming on the topic of Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) than other areas of the curriculum, what we have heard so far has been positive. Bridget Phillipson's plans to review the proposed changes to SRE guidance - with a focus on children's wellbeing and the aim to stop SRE being used as 'a political football' - are a welcome new direction.



Abi Angus
Head of Participation and Programmes, The Centre for Education and Youth

Sex and Relationships Education

Abi Angus, Head of Participation and Programmes

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ensuring that LGBTQ+ young people feel properly supported, included and represented. [Effective SRE is key in supporting all young people](#) to make informed decisions about their comfort and safety in all the relationships they hold in life, whether romantic or platonic, and Labour's thoughtful approach so far holds promise for future steps.

Special Educational Needs & Disabilities and Mental Health

Alix Robertson, Head of Engagement

The new government needs to move fast in reforming current support systems for young people with SEND and mental health challenges. While broad promises of a "community-wide approach", earlier intervention, and improvements in "inclusivity and expertise" are facing in the right direction, the sector needs a clear and structured plan for how Labour will address breaking point issues such as the high-needs budget deficits faced by many local councils and unacceptably long waiting times for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to support those in crisis.

Plans to invest £175 million in specialist mental health professionals in every school are welcome, but whole school approaches with high quality training for school staff remain important, as [CfEY outlined in our recent report](#) with mental health social enterprise Mind Ahead and in our 12 '[Introduction to SEND](#)' films for new teachers. Support within schools - such as the [need for good practice in social emotional learning](#) - is important, but the new government must also ensure this extends beyond the school gates. Our current work with the Youth Endowment Foundation, reviewing the SEND support available for children at risk of youth violence and those already involved in the youth justice system, highlights the importance of joined up, high quality support provided consistently across the local services children, young people and their families encounter. This is essential in ensuring those who face additional barriers can thrive and achieve their full potential in society.

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Alix Robertson

Head of Engagement, The Centre for Education and Youth

Enrichment and youth work

Terry Boyce, Co-CEO

We welcome Labour's proposal to grant 16- and 17-year-olds the right to vote, working in tandem with existing youth voice advocacy schemes, such as our [Young Collective](#). This change must be accompanied by a significant increase in funding for citizenship education and active citizenship programmes to ensure that young people are well-prepared and informed participants in our democracy.

The proposed £95m investment in Youth Futures hubs, while insufficient to fill the gap created by austerity measures, must be executed in collaboration with grassroots, regional, and national youth work organisations. It is essential to support these organisations, enabling them to expand their services, particularly for the most marginalised groups. Additionally, we urge prioritising cross-sector collaboration to enhance enrichment opportunities for young people both within and outside schools, ensuring that various agencies can work together effectively to provide comprehensive support and opportunities that will benefit all children and young people. This approach is detailed in our [recent report](#) for The National Citizen Service Trust and Duke of Edinburgh's Award, with UK Youth.

CfEY welcomes Labour's recognition of the crucial role youth workers play in hospitals and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), and hope this extends to recognising the significant impact of [detached youth work](#) alongside centre-based provision. Our own research with organisations such as the [Trust for Developing Communities](#) and [Safer London](#) has shown these approaches are highly effective for engaging young people who are facing challenging situations and supporting them to make positive decisions and form meaningful, trusting relationships. However, in its aims to 'take back our streets', the new government must be careful not to scapegoat young people as the sole source of antisocial behaviour. Our [Young Expert Citizens](#) programme shows that we can and must view young people in terms of their assets, particularly the knowledge and expertise inherent in their lived experiences. A constructive focus on preventing young people from being drawn into violence is critical, and these efforts must be integrated with existing interventions, learning from the work of Violence Reduction Units (VRUs) and youth organisations delivering such initiatives nationwide.

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Terry Boyce
Interim co-CEO, The Centre for Education and Youth

Tackling poverty must be the priority

Conor Carleton, Junior Associate

Something we consistently see across our work at CfEY is that problems in the education space often have causes and solutions that lie outside the sector. The last 14 years have seen sharp rises in poverty levels across the country, and this has shaped educational outcomes. At present, schools are acting as wraparound services to plug gaps left by government failures to invest properly in housing, healthcare, and transport, but without the resources or training to do so properly.

Research on hardship published last month by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation revealed that a third of primary schools now run food banks, more than a third of primary school pupils now regularly come to school hungry, and in the absence of government support, as many as two in five teachers are now providing support for pupils out of their own pocket. These findings are no surprise to us - they match what teachers have been telling us for some time. The Government's proposals to introduce universal breakfast clubs for primary school children, to fund an additional 3,000 nurseries, and to properly tackle the recruitment and retention crisis are welcome - these measures will provide much needed support for pupils and their families and reduce the pressure on teachers, but they will not fundamentally tackle the underlying issue of poverty.

Labour's mission of 'national renewal' must include a narrative shift on poverty. Poverty is not a fact of life. Poverty is systemic and it is avoidable, and it can be tackled with political will. As I argued earlier this year, this requires the Government to see across the piece, to take a multi-sector, multi-pronged approach and to properly invest in public services. The Government has plenty of prior approaches to draw on: Every Child Matters (2003) and the Marmot Review (2010) both set out useful frameworks for driving sector change with a broad approach. Above all, only by tackling the root cause - poverty - can the Government properly address the fundamental issues facing the educational sector.



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Conor Carleton
Junior Associate, The Centre for Education and Youth