

# A NEW TERM



**Speak up  
for education**

The future shape of education will play a major part in the decision-making of many voters in the coming general election. ATL believes it's time to cut through the party politics of education and start listening to those in the know - the education staff working in our schools and colleges. On behalf of our members, ATL calls for the following:

## Speaking up for trust:

“Government must rely on the experience of teaching staff in making decisions about education. I want what works, not what sounds good.”

ATL survey, January 2010

### ● Trust teachers' judgement on curriculum and assessment

The government currently determines what teachers teach, how they teach and how learning is assessed. ATL believes the national curriculum should be decided centrally as a framework of all the skills and areas of knowledge to which all students are entitled. However, the exact detail of what is taught should be determined by teachers locally, subject to consultation with parents and the local community. This requires local assessment of students' achievement, of a kind which supports their future learning. Teachers are the professionals with the expert knowledge of the curriculum, and the best methods of assessment and teaching for their students. They should be trusted to make those professional judgements.

### ● Abolish Ofsted inspections in favour of local guidance and support

Schools are currently accountable to parents, governors, the school improvement partner (SIP), the local authority, Ofsted and Whitehall, and are judged on pupil performance data and via the self-evaluation form. While we agree that schools and colleges need to be accountable, this is too much. Ending Ofsted school inspections and tweaking the inspection and support roles of local authorities and SIPs would save over £70m a year, leaving Ofsted to concentrate on a more strategic role.

### ● Abolish pupil performance league tables

Parents and local communities need a way of assessing how well their schools are performing. However, the current pupil performance league tables pit school against school, undercutting valuable collaboration between institutions. They do not promote equitable access of opportunity for all. And they encourage a risk-averse culture in schools with the teaching of a narrower curriculum, which results in shallow learning and student disengagement. A report card is an alternative that might provide a more balanced view for parents and communities.

### ● Reduce staff workloads by cutting unnecessary bureaucracy

Schools are infected with the culture of 'if it isn't written down, it doesn't happen'. From detailed lesson plans to the full-time work of the 'data manager', school staff are spending untold hours minding their backs. This work is neither welcome nor productive. As professionals, teachers need some control over their workload to reduce their stress and exhaustion.

### ● Keep national pay scales and conditions of employment for teaching staff

National salary scales across England and Wales create equity, encourage geographical mobility of staff, and improve average earnings in economically lagging regions. National pay and conditions also allow schools to focus on teaching rather than policies and practices around reward. And they prevent the kind of race to the bottom in quality which is often linked to a free market in goods and services. Academies' pay should also reflect that of schools.

### ● Ensure pay parity between sectors

Decent salaries are needed to attract and retain good graduates to work in education. Pay parity across education is essential to allow the best graduates to choose the sector in which they wish to teach on the basis of aptitude and interest rather than salary. After many years of playing catch up we have pay parity between sixth form colleges and state schools, and it is important this is maintained. Pay for FE lecturers still lags 8.5 per cent behind that of schoolteachers.

## Speaking up for fairness:

“As I reach retirement, after 38 years of unstinting service, I feel very strongly that the nation should keep faith with me, as I kept faith with it.”

ATL survey, January 2010

“Most categories of teacher in 2009 continue to report working over 50 hours per week.”

DCSF Teachers' workloads diary survey, 2009

### ● Introduce national pay scales for support staff

Over the last decade schools have chosen to use their increased funding to transform the way they work by employing a range of support staff. At the same time, local authorities went through a staff single status exercise which often did not recognise the proliferation of roles in schools. The new School Support Staff Negotiating Body urgently needs to agree and ensure implementation of national pay scales to achieve greater equity for support staff.

### ● Safeguard public sector pensions

The average pension being paid out by the Teachers' Pension Scheme is currently around £9,000 a year. The average pension paid by the Local Government Pension Scheme, including to school support staff, is around £4,000 a year. Given that support staff are on a low wage, and school and college teaching staff are lower paid than many comparable degree-based professionals, these pensions are a fair reward for years of service. What's more, the pension entitlements of school and college staff are reasonable and affordable into the future as reforms to the teachers' scheme in 2007 mean any future rise in the required contribution rate will have to be met by members. ATL would condemn any move to erode pensions simply to create a veneer of equality between the public and private sectors.

### ● No further rises in the state retirement age

ATL supports the removal of the compulsory retirement age as this would prevent employers from removing staff without fair process and allow staff to determine when they retire. The state retirement age should not be increased without a comprehensive review of the qualifying periods for entitlement to the state retirement pension, and a better standard of living for pensioners, with pensions increasing in line with salaries rather than inflation. Increasing the state retirement age is not the way to avoid pensioner poverty. It would create a class of people too old to work and too young for a state pension.

### ● Staff to remain anonymous while an allegation is being investigated

False allegations cause huge damage to staff careers and mean good people leave education. When a member of staff has been suspended while investigations are ongoing they should have the right to anonymity. This underscores the principle that suspension is a neutral act until the investigation is concluded.

### ● Maintain or improve funding levels for each learner

Schools and colleges have received unprecedented increases in funding in real terms over the past decade, but have also faced increased demands. However hard the squeeze on public spending, the government must never consider that maintaining high quality education and training is optional. Adequate funding to support increased demand in further and higher education is needed to retain this quality.

### ● Fair funding for all learners

Learners, including those with special educational needs, require varying levels of support, so equal funding for all learners across all sectors does not equate with fair funding. It is difficult to combine a transparent national funding system with proper local discretion over funding, while also ensuring that individual institutions are treated fairly, but this is what government must continue to strive for. Given the importance of early years education, the presumption that primary schools need less funding than secondaries needs revisiting. And since further education tends to serve the less advantaged, it should be funded accordingly.

### ● No profits for sponsors or governors of academies or other state schools

For a century it has been assumed universally that education is provided free by the state for all and would suffer if operated for profit. Even in the independent sector, schools which are true charities are usually better providers than those run for profit. To divert state resources, which should be for learners, into the pockets of 'owners', would be an outrage.

## ● End child poverty in the UK by 2020

Low educational achievement is strongly connected with poverty and disadvantage. International research shows that around 85 per cent of a student's attainment is due to their family background. With four million children – one in three – currently living in poverty in the UK, one of the highest rates in the developed world, the government's 2010 target to halve child poverty is likely to fall woefully short. Bolder action is needed to end child poverty by 2020, so eradicating inequality and providing all children with the opportunity to succeed.

## ● Play a part in achieving the Millennium Development and Education for All goals

In the 10 years since the international community adopted the six Education for All goals and the Millennium Development Goals much has been achieved, but many of the world's poorest countries are not on track to meet their 2015 targets. Future UK governments must commit to providing more and better aid for education; support the creation of a new global education fund; commit to improving education quality and inclusion; and support efforts to close the global literacy gap.

**To find out more about ATL's election campaign, get hold of campaign materials, or to lobby your parliamentary candidates visit [www.atl.org.uk/election](http://www.atl.org.uk/election)**

### **Speaking up for education for all:**

“Education is not only a universal human right but a driver of economic development and global security.”

**1GOAL - Send My Friend to School 2010**

“Research tells us that factors outside schools, such as family background and economic circumstances, account for about 85 per cent of the differences in pupil attainment.”

**Dr Mary Bousted, ATL's general secretary, June 2009**

**ATL is the union for education professionals across the UK.**

**Active in the maintained, independent and post-16 sectors, we use our members' experiences to influence education policy, and we work with government and employers to secure fair pay and working conditions. From early years to HE, teachers to support staff, lecturers to leaders, we support and represent our members throughout their careers.**

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