

# **Campaign for Real Education**

## **An education manifesto for the 2015 general election**

The UK is falling behind many other industrialised nations in terms of basic literacy and numeracy levels. According to the OECD our 16 to 24 year-olds are actually less competent in the 3Rs than the older generation of 55 to 65 year-olds. In the matter of education, successive governments have failed our young people. The Campaign for Real Education believes that the time has come for meaningful change. Our manifesto is addressed to all political parties. It proposes change in six key areas.

### **1. The Curriculum**

Diversity and choice within the curriculum and between curricula will enhance the prospects of our education system meeting the needs of the 21st century. It will, also, ensure that the best emerges

- a. The current National Curriculum is a 'one size fits all' model based on age-related 'key stages'. We propose a more flexible structure that will allow pupils to progress between 'key stages' in accordance with their ability, regardless of their age.
- b. There should be more flexibility within the curriculum for children at secondary level to follow either a vocational or an academic pathway.
- c. The non-compulsory status of the National Curriculum for academies, free schools and independent schools should be extended to all schools.

### **2. National Assessment**

- a. National tests at 7 and 11 should be simplified and take up less time to administer.
- b. GCSE currently exercises what is, in effect, a monopoly at 16+ and its credibility has been undermined by grade inflation. It should be abolished and replaced by a dual-exam system leading to either vocational or to academic qualifications.
- c. In order to prevent grade inflation public examinations at 16+ and 18+ should be 'norm referenced'. This will mean that a specific percentage of candidates will attain each grade. The top 10% of candidates will be awarded an A-Grade, the next 20% a B Grade and so on.

### **3. Parental choice of school**

Local communities, based on the jurisdiction areas of current local authorities, should determine, as far as is practical, the types of school that they wish to have within their locality. This should include, but not be confined to, comprehensive schools. Where a community wishes to have grammar schools, these should be set up alongside high quality vocational schools. Bi-lateral schools, incorporating both academic and vocational sections should, also, be made an option.

### **4. Early Years and Infants**

As resources allow, the spending priority for the education budget should be with younger children where it is likely to have the greatest impact and to make the greatest long-term difference.

### **5. Teacher Training and Ofsted**

At the heart of the UK's failure to match the best performing education systems around the world are our teacher trainers and Ofsted inspectors. For too long they have been promoting and enforcing failed teaching methodologies on our schools. A 'root and branch' reform is needed of the rules and regulations under which they operate. We must ensure that trainee teachers can experience, and be encouraged to use, a variety of teaching methods, including traditional 'whole class' teaching that is used widely in the high performing schools of the Asia-Pacific region.

### **6. Higher Education**

Too many young people are being encouraged to undertake university degrees courses that lead to disillusion, high personal debt and to unemployment or under-employment. Post-school vocational training and apprenticeships should be greatly expanded and should build on post-14 vocational courses at school. Polytechnics should be restored to meet the demand for vocational courses.