

Annual Conference Resolutions 2003

1. Schools are now teaching to the SATS. This is non-educational, an unproductive use of time and resources, and a source of stress especially to younger pupils. Tests should be available for *use* on a voluntary basis, with schools being accountable to LEAs and OFSTED.

2. The SEA calls upon the Government to adopt a funding system for schools which is transparent, based upon the needs of schools and students and provides equality of opportunity to all our children.

3. This Conference is pleased to note the progress towards value-added assessment of a school's performance and calls for more work to realise its potential.

4. This Conference calls upon the Government to end its strategy of creating specialist schools as its favoured route for improving standards in secondary education.

5. The SEA calls upon the Government to bring in legislation to prevent planning permission allowing the building or extending Academy Schools on designated public parks and playing fields.

6. The SEA firmly supports the ideals of comprehensive education noting the long history of evident success in raising educational standards.

The SEA conference deplores the Government's intention to undermine the English comprehensive educational system.

The SEA calls for:

- The abolition of arbitrary targets imposed on schools
- The abolition of league tables
- An inspection system based on school self review and evaluation
- A transparent system of funding for schools.

7. This Conference calls upon the Government to give its official backing to David Chaytor's Ten Minute Bill on ending Selection when it comes up for its Second Reading in July.

8. The SEA welcomes the formation of Comprehensives Future and urges all members and CLPs to respond to the "The Best Education for All" making clear that there should be an explicit reference in the next manifesto to the abolition of all selection by ability or "aptitude" for secondary schools.

9. This Conference welcomes the Government's action to promote the inclusion agenda and notes the existing policy of SEA on inclusion. Conference agrees to set up a policy commission to develop this further in the light of recent legislation and current developments.

10. Britain used to have a public education system which was decentralised and accountable to its local community. Under successive governments it has become highly centralised and largely unaccountable. The commercial model avidly pursued by the present Government with large parts of the service contracted out to private sector increases the power at the centre and removes even farther the citizen who is the consumer from decision making. The SEA calls upon the Government to return education to a national system locally administered with democratic accountability and a proper professional role for those working in it.

11. This Conference is alarmed at the way in which personal wealth is being allowed to propagate 'creationism' at public expense through the Vardy Foundation in the North-East and calls on the Government to ensure that children are taught the difference between fact and opinion, beliefs based on faith and those based on rigorous scientific evidence.

12. This Conference condemns all those in the media and at Downside School who were involved in the disastrous attempt to educate Ryan Bell at the school and calls for a recognition that private schools such as Downside achieve whatever appears to be their "success" by means of substantial extra resources and by catering only for a narrow segment of the population. They were unable to cope with the sort of challenges which LEA comprehensive schools have been dealing with successfully for years.

This 'stunt' should have been recognised for what it was from the start and all those involved should be thoroughly ashamed of themselves. We hope that Ryan Bell has not been too adversely affected by the experience and wish him well in the future.

16. This Conference views with dismay the continuing process of fragmentation being pursued by the Government within the secondary school system. In the name of "diversity" we see the development of inequality through various tiers of specialised schools, academies, faith schools, beacon schools, foundation schools etc. in addition to the existing residue of grammar and secondary modern schools (even if the latter now have different names). All these elements have different levels of financing and staffing creating serious disparities of provision.

The goal of competitive "diversity" has replaced the socialist ideal of a single comprehensive system, unselective and with a broad and balanced curriculum as a right for all children, developed in various ways to match their individual needs. In such a system each school can work to its strengths according to its intake and staffs, and also attend to eradicating its weaknesses in order to produce the highest possible educational standards.

17. This Conference calls upon the Government to outlaw discrimination in education which contravenes the Universal Declaration of Human Rights statement that

“... parents have a right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children ... Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms ... without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status ”