

WHAT WE STAND FOR' [A Statement of SEA Principles]

We recognise that the UK has four different national educational systems. **The following broad principles should apply to all:**

We believe that every child matters. They deserve a happy and healthy start in life. For too long politicians in all parties have tinkered with our unjust educational system. There has been a gradual switch to a neo-liberal approach that includes privatisation and excessive competition between educational institutions. We now have a fragmented and under resourced public education system. There is too much testing of pupils' academic performance resulting in unjust league tables and pupil and teacher stress. We, in the Socialist Educational Association [SEA] want an educational system that is **secular, based on equality of opportunity, democratically accountable and collaborative.**

At **foundation level**, we wish to ensure that all children should have access to free, high quality early years provision by re-establishing and expanding the network of Sure Start Centres and Flying Start Schemes. **Breakfast clubs**, school dinners and after school clubs should be available to all young children to help alleviate child poverty and promote achievement. **The primary school curriculum** should be age-appropriate, broad and balanced, with an emphasis on experimental, investigative and creative learning. Future curriculum development should be led by teachers and educationalists. We want to see an end to high stakes **testing and league tables**, as they have a negative impact on children's education, health and wellbeing.

At **secondary school level**, we call for all schools to be truly comprehensive with no academic selection. They must comply with a national code of **fair admissions**. The law needs to guarantee **the rights of disabled children and those with special needs** to have their educational needs met in line with their and their families' wishes, without discrimination in line with the Equality Act 2010. This needs to be backed up by the appropriate level of funding and support. All school students should receive a **broad and balanced curriculum**, which includes vocational, sporting and arts subjects and addresses young people's personal, social and emotional development. State funded schools should not be forced to conduct religious worship, although all religions and philosophies should be discussed.

National exams should only be set at Year 11 onwards. Such exams should not be a crude standardised test of memory but should test the kinds of skills young people will need in adult life. Younger children's social and academic progress should be assessed, especially for diagnostic purposes, by their teachers. **National monitoring** should be based on samples of children's work, not published on a school by school basis.

We support a **funding system** that meets the needs of all pupils, especially those that are disabled, or have learning difficulties, EAL or mental health issues. **Money for new schools** should only go to where there is a need for new places. Admissions must be controlled on an area not a school basis. Decisions about opening or closing schools should be taken by locally elected people. **Fee-Paying schools** should have their charitable status/tax exemption removed.

Independent careers advice and guidance must be provided to support young people's progress.

At **Sixth Form/Further Education level**, the SEA wants the Education Maintenance Allowance [EMA] to be provided throughout the country for young people in need, lower tuition fees for unemployed adult students, a better system of student support and restoration of post 16 funding. Sixth form colleges should be zero rated for VAT. Currently there are too many small school sixth forms. There should be a move to comprehensive post-16 (tertiary) education by cooperation between schools and sixth form and FE colleges. We want to restore a broad and balanced curriculum that values **vocational education**. Staff at Post 16 level should be given parity of terms and conditions of employment with primary and secondary teachers.

Training providers, state and private, must cater for disadvantaged youth. **Those not in Education, Employment or Training** ('NEETs') are entitled to a meaningful and personalised curriculum encompassing employability, personal and social development, communication, team-work, and problem solving.

Universities/Higher Education level, must be funded to end the use of zero hours contracts, unpaid internships and tuition fees. **Education policy** must be based on evidence derived from education departments in cooperation with teachers. There must be no public money for private universities. Admission to universities should be based on merit not privilege.

We want state funded schools and colleges to have **governors** elected from their staff, students, parents, the local authority and representatives from their local community. **All teachers should be properly qualified and paid** or working towards an appropriate teaching qualification, administered by university schools of education. **The work load issue** should be addressed by reducing bureaucracy, allowing the employment of more teachers, legally binding lower class sizes, less contact time, more time for collaborative planning, all to be paid for by fair funding.

All school staff including **supply teachers and teaching assistants**, must receive regular professional in-service training throughout their career. Supply teachers should be offered appropriate pay and conditions by a publicly run service, thus ending the exploitative conditions offered by private staff agencies.

Current inspection procedures, magnified and misinterpreted by nervous heads, produce excessive lesson observations and unnecessarily high levels of stress and workload. **A future inspection system** should be based on school self-evaluation and credible peer review. It should be collaborative, local, equitable, supportive, rigorous and independent of central government.

The SEA wants an end to Free Schools and Academies. We want a halt to creeping privatisation of our public education service and the profiteering of academy chains. These chains have greater powers over schools than do local government, thus posing a threat to democracy and to society at large. We stand for good local comprehensive schools for all children, and lifelong access to colleges and higher education institutions for everyone. We want a broader approach to education, including restoration of **youth services** and of **adult education** for living not just for jobs.

We need a policy that is ready to run from day one of a Labour Government.