

Proposed quick wins for an incoming Labour government

January 2024

Background

In December 2023, ASCL held a Presidential Dinner with Bridget Phillipson, the Shadow Secretary of State, and Catherine McKinnell, the Shadow Schools Minister. We touched on some of the long-term policy proposals set out in a number of our recent policy papers, including our:

- [Blueprint for a Fairer Education System](#)
- [Proposals for the Future of Inspection](#)
- [Manifesto for the 2024 General Election](#)
- [Proactive submission to Labour's proposed Curriculum and Assessment Review](#)

Our discussions focused around the three biggest current challenges in education, according to our members:

1. the recruitment and retention crisis
2. the widening disadvantage gap
3. the ever-expanding expectations on schools and colleges

We were heartened by Bridget and Catherine's engagement with these proposals, and by Labour's desire to work with the profession to tackle these challenges.

We recognise, however, that some of our proposals will take time and money to implement, and that there is also a place for some quick wins, which could make a significant difference to our members and the communities they serve, and which could be implemented in advance of the longer-term proposals at no, or relatively low, cost.

This document suggests twenty such quick wins. It should be seen as supplementary to the four documents mentioned above. Some of these suggestions draw on the proposals in our previous documents, where these could be implemented either immediately or within the first few months of Labour coming into power; others are new.

Suggested quick wins

To support and develop the profession:

1. Change the narrative around education and education staff. Take every opportunity to meaningfully recognise and celebrate the work that teachers, leaders and support staff do. Encourage more people (including those from minority ethnic backgrounds, who are still under-represented in teaching, and particularly in leadership) to go into and stay in education-focused roles by promoting them as a valued, rewarding and joyful careers.
2. Urgently implement a re-accreditation process for high-quality initial teacher training providers which have lost accreditation as part of the recent ITT review.
3. Implement the recommendation of the workload reduction taskforce to remove performance-related pay, which the current government has just accepted.

4. Broaden the scope of the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD) to include all school leaders, including Business Leaders, to ensure that they are remunerated in the same way as other leadership colleagues. The STPCD should also cover roles common in multi-academy trusts (MATs), including CEOs, and require MATs and academies to use the Document as a benchmark in their pay setting.
5. Initiate an immediate and rapid review into introducing tailored student loan repayment schemes for teachers and leaders
6. Expand the Blue Light Card discount scheme to include people working in education.

To support students to progress, particularly those from more disadvantaged backgrounds:

7. Provide formulae and equation sheets in GCSE maths, combined science and physics exams in perpetuity. The current government has already committed that this will happen in 2024, as was the case in 2022 and 2023, to recognise the ongoing impact of the pandemic on students' learning, but has made no commitment to continue this approach beyond this exam series.
8. Pause the imminent defunding of large numbers of Applied General Qualifications (AGQs), and consult with schools, colleges and employers about the right approach to these qualifications. Specifically, commit to not remove funding for any AGQ until 1 August 2027, so that students can enrol on all current AGQs up to and including in the 2026/27 academic year.
9. Ringfence a significant proportion of the apprenticeship levy for young people under the age of 25.
10. Set up a cross-government taskforce to agree a multi-agency strategy for supporting vulnerable children.

To hold schools to account in a fair and proportionate way:

11. Immediately remove the overall graded judgement from Ofsted inspections, as a precursor to the development of a report card / accountability dashboard as more broad and nuanced way of assessing a school or college's strengths and weaknesses.
12. Require Ofsted to make all inspector training materials publicly available.
13. Scrap the EBacc performance measure, again ahead of a report card-based accountability system, to support a broader and more balanced curriculum.
14. Be as clear as possible as soon as possible about which legacy non-statutory expectations on schools, such as the 32.5 hour minimum week, still stand under a Labour government.
15. Provide clarity on the status of the current ambition that all schools should be part of multi-academy trusts. Review mechanisms which compel schools down this route in a blunt way, particularly the power for DfE Regional Directors to issue any school with two consecutive Ofsted judgements of less than 'good' with an academy order.

To enable schools and colleges to budget effectively:

16. Commit to providing three-year funding settlements to schools and colleges, including special schools and alternative provision, to enable them to plan and spend their budgets with more confidence.
17. Review all elements of school and college budgets which are ring-fenced for particular activities, or for which schools, colleges or trusts need to bid, and include as many of these as possible in the core schools budget.
18. Introduce a system of auto-enrolment for all children and young people eligible for free school meals.

To improve the relationship between schools and parents:

19. Implement processes which require parents to have followed a school's complaint policy before a complaint can be escalated to Ofsted.
20. Review the significant increase in Freedom of Information requests to schools and colleges, to consider how the impact of these on leaders' workloads could be reduced.