



UNISON Cymru/Wales Education Manifesto 2016 For the schools, colleges and universities we need

Wales needs world class schools, colleges and universities and an education workforce that is properly rewarded for its contribution. The Welsh Assembly Elections are on 5 May 2016.

Use your vote to defend your public services.

A world class education system can drive Wales' economic growth. It can help deliver a fairer society providing equal opportunity for all and unlocking people's potential. This easy-to-read guide shows the education policies UNISON Cymru/Wales is campaigning for at the Welsh Elections. Read it, tell your friends and colleagues about it and together we can challenge the candidates in every Assembly seat to invest in the schools, colleges and universities we need.

Education should be freely available and not based on ability to pay. Our education establishments provide learning and improve people's chances in life and should never be seen as money-making machines.

World class education is not as simple as employing good teachers and lecturers. Instead, a range of professionals, administrative, technical and support staff all have a role to play. Improving the conditions, pay and incentives for all staff is a priority.



OUR SCHOOLS

It's important that local councils oversee schools so that local people have a say. Under council control, schools are able to work together and serve the community more efficiently.

It is important that the Foundation Phase for 3-7 year olds continues, and the Flying Start Programme for 0-3 year olds is critical to supporting families in deprived areas.

We want to work with the Welsh Government on a national structure for school support staff so that there is consistency of levels and roles across Wales. This is to ensure that everyone in the school, whatever their role, is working to an agreed standard.

The Welsh Government must act to end to the inequality of term time only pay for school support staff.

We passionately believe in a world class comprehensive system of education and reject academies and free schools. If staff are equipped with the best skills and supported in their professional development, through a New Deal for the Education Workforce, our schools will succeed.

Every day UNISON members in schools provide medicine and administer personal care to students, yet training provision is haphazard and there is no financial recognition of this responsibility. New Welsh Government guidance here is crucial.



FURTHER EDUCATION

Colleges are as important as schools and universities: FE offers vital second chances to adults returning to education and to those from more deprived communities; the majority of learners in FE are women and FE also supports students with learning difficulties. Despite this, FE has suffered budget cuts and lacks the prestige of schools and Higher Education.

Let's see FE in its rightful place within Welsh Education policy: provided with adequate funding and held in equal esteem with Higher Education and schools.

Part-time or flexible study allows many adults to return to learning though they often face a lack of co-operation from their employer. Welsh Government should provide incentives to ensure part-time study and lifelong learning are available to all and commit to genuine equality between full and part-time study.

Good quality apprenticeships helping people move from education to work and into quality jobs is essential. Delivering apprenticeships funded by the public purse through FE could revitalise the sector as well as delivering better value for money by re-investing money currently siphoned off as private profit.

Education providers have a duty to reflect the diversity of the communities they serve and employees should have a voice in decision-making. Monitoring the staff profile would ensure these institutions are complying with their public sector equality duties.

The Education Maintenance Allowance in Wales is critical in supporting access to post-16 education for poorer students and must continue.

A qualifications framework similar to that being developed for school employees should be implemented for FE support staff, guaranteeing training and career development. In the context of public spending cuts the distinction between the role of lecturer and technician/demonstrator is increasingly blurred. Technician/demonstrators play a key role in providing learning, but are not a substitute for a lecturer.



HIGHER EDUCATION

We are committed to a free education system funded by general taxation but welcome any examination of fairer ways of resourcing higher education. Extending working class people's access to Further and Higher Education must be a priority for any government that wants to tackle poverty and the low skill bases in Wales.

Many HE institutions have used cuts in the teaching grant and the increase in fees to reduce support staff numbers, pay and conditions. Where support services have been privatised or outsourced, basic employment conditions have been further eroded. Often the universities paying the highest wages to vice chancellors have the largest number of low paid or casualised staff and many experience poverty despite being in work.

As a minimum our universities should be Living Wage employers. All forms of marketisation are to be resisted as harmful to the quality of services for students and the pay and working conditions of staff.

Marketisation in HE and FE is a false economy; when serious problems materialise later in the contract, it is the public sector left to sort out the mess.

The subsidy for students leaving Wales to study should end. This money should be invested in Welsh HE and local economies and not institutions outside of Wales. A bursary or access scheme could be maintained to support poorer students to study at Oxbridge.

The presence of union representatives on governing bodies of colleges and universities should be promoted. It would increase democratic oversight/ accountability of public funding and how the institutions are governed.

Universities play a crucial role in our society and economy, and receive substantial public investment, however they are not part of the public sector. A new social partnership body should be established where the Welsh Government, universities, trade unions and NUS Wales can work together to deliver for the whole of Wales.



WULF

The Wales Union Learning Fund has been an undoubtedly success, unlocking people's potential and life-long learning. When the training budgets of public services are being cut, protection of the WULF budget to improve the skills of our workforce is essential.



UNISON Cymru/Wales has also produced a general manifesto as well as special mini manifestos for Health and Local Government. To obtain copies or further copies of this UNISON Education manifesto, please contact a.gittins@unison.co.uk