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Union demands return of academies to LEA control

Read the NUT manifesto [here](#)

Anthea Lipsett

Education Guardian, Friday 2 November 2007 19.54 EDT

Teachers today urged the government to reverse the decision to introduce academies and the requirement to promote choice and diversity in schools.

The National Union of Teachers' manifesto said all schools should be returned to local authority control, and LEAs should promote community cohesion and determine school admissions policies.

The union called for a review of the the Education Act 2006 to tackle the "structural incoherence" of the current school system, arguing that the barriers of social class in education need to be tackled by a programme of increased support for schools in the toughest areas.

"The requirement on local authorities to promote choice and diversity should be abolished. It is a flawed concept. The expansion of academies should be halted and existing academies should be reintegrated into the maintained sector," said the manifesto for English schools, A good local school for every child and every community.

"The direction of travel in the secretary of state's statement of July 10 2007, to the House of Commons, in which he said that "the test of whether an organisation can be a potential sponsor should not be its bank balance, but whether it can demonstrate leadership, innovation and a commitment to act in the public interest", is patently obvious. Against those criteria, there is no necessity for any school to be outside the maintained sector."

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The NUT also calls for an independent government review of the effects of testing on teaching and learning and a parallel review of the primary national curriculum and the assessment arrangements for key stages 1 to 3. The call echoes the findings in today's primary education review that show increased testing has not improved results in schools.

The union's intention is to influence the shape of the expected education bill to be announced in the Queen's speech next week.

It wants to see a timetable to meet the prime minister's target of matching the funding of each pupil in state schools with the current spending on pupils in private schools. The target for spending £8,000 in real terms annually per pupil in the state sector should be reached by 2014.

Before then the priority should be to increase support for schools with large numbers of disadvantaged children. There should be a ring-fenced grant covering all groups of young people in need of intensive support, including young people from minority ethnic groups and white working class backgrounds.

The union also calls for democratically elected school boards to be piloted and a new UK council for education, which would help share experiences and practice in education developments within the UK.

All teachers should be entitled to a sabbatical lasting one term every seven years to conduct research and get £1,200 a year for professional development. The government should also consider making Post Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) courses two-year programmes with proper funding for students to enable participation.

The NUT wants teachers to be consulted and to vote on the principle of a professional council for teachers, and it wants headteachers to be confident that headship is not a form of Russian roulette.

"The first response of a local authority when a school is given a notice to improve or placed in special measures should be professional development not dismissal of the headteacher or closure of the school," the manifesto states.



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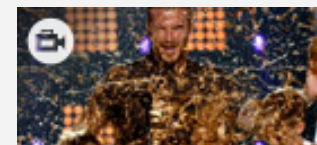
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Children who are falling behind should be given one-to-one tuition and all pupils should be entitled to outdoor learning, including cultural sporting and arts activities.

The general secretary of the NUT, Steve Sinnott, said the speech made yesterday by Gordon Brown had been a "positive" step, but the Queen's speech and subsequent education bill must not reflect past policies of choice and diversity.

"Such policies encourage segregation and a two-tier education system," he said.

"Our proposals for enhancing the role of schools in their communities and restoring confidence and trust in teachers draw a line under the policies of previous governments. They highlight the importance of tackling social barriers through strengthening the role of schools and trusting the professionalism of teachers."

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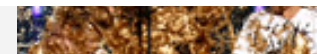
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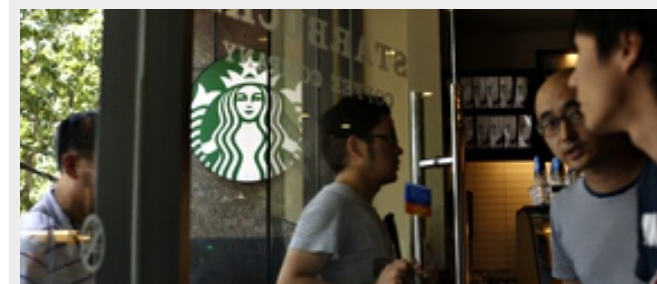
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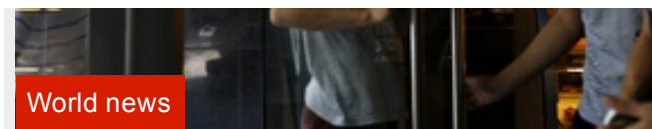
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