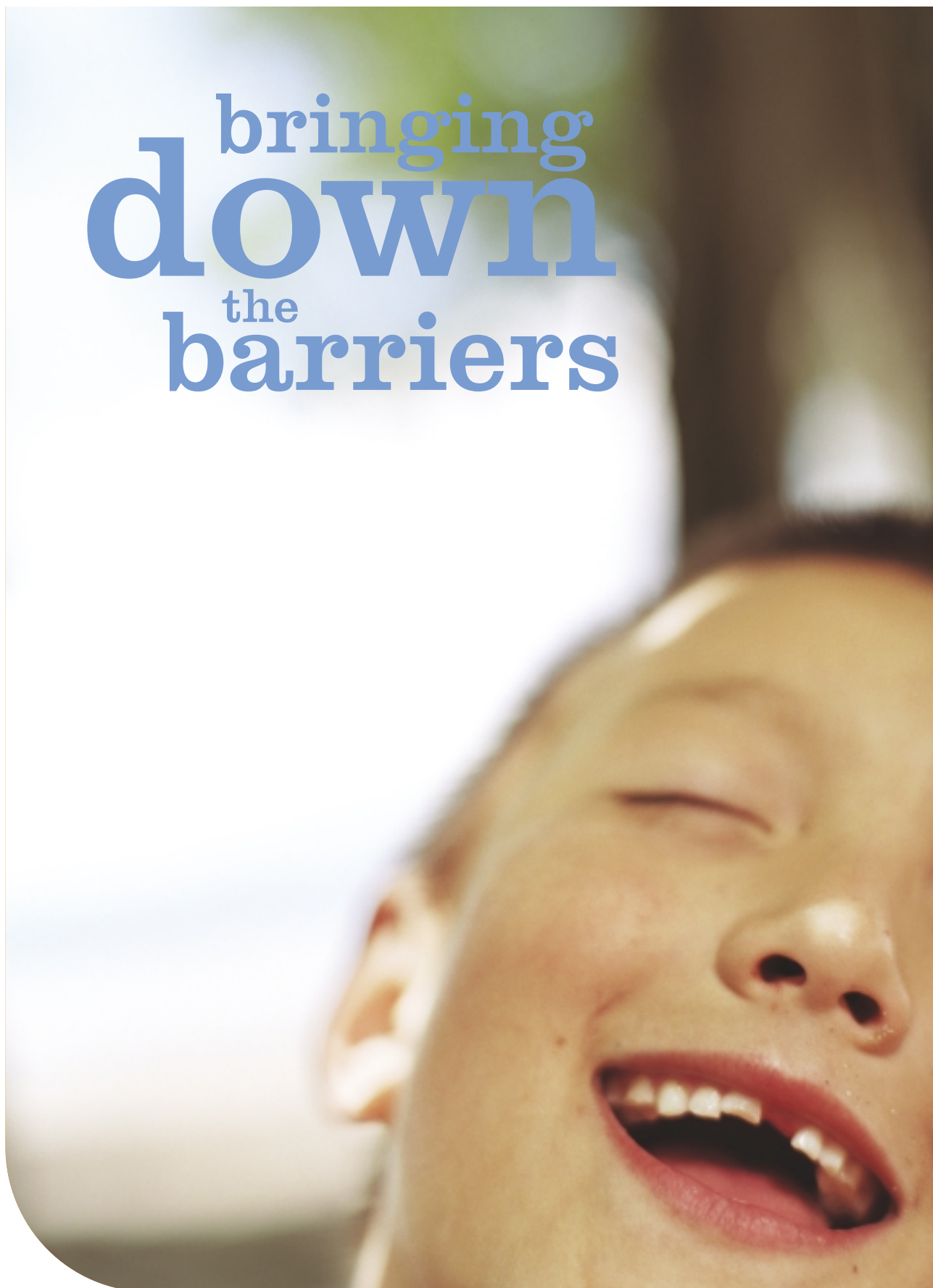




NUT education statement:
meeting the needs of all children and young people

bringing down the barriers



introduction

Steve Sinnott,

general secretary of the national union of teachers



I am very proud of the NUT's Education Statement 'Bringing down the Barriers'. I believe that its policies and proposals represent a powerful strategy for education in Wales for at least the next five years, if not longer.

The Statement is rooted in the traditions and history of the National Union of Teachers. The NUT has an enormous wealth of knowledge and experience from which to draw. For over 130 years, the National Union of Teachers has had a unique record in promoting positive progress in education. Our policies have enhanced the lives of children and young people and their teachers.

'Bringing down the Barriers' is based on thorough research and evidence. We believe that, if adopted, its proposals will enhance education for all children and young people.

Indeed, teachers must feel able to contribute to the debate on how education can enhance the lives of children and young people in the global economy.

It is vital that we learn from and work with education systems internationally. We can learn from and contribute to their development.

'Bringing down the Barriers' both represents the voice of NUT members and all members of the teaching profession. 'Bringing down the Barriers' is for everyone involved in education and in school communities; parents, young people, teachers and all who work in schools. I hope that our proposals, and the principles on which they are based, will resonate with a wide audience and not only with those in the education world.

I would welcome views and contributions on this document. I commend 'Bringing down the Barriers' and look forward to a healthy debate on its proposals.

1. Education is a fundamental human right. All children and young people have a right to high quality education. Education is central to the personal development and health of young people. It encourages them to think and acquire knowledge. Education enables young people to make sense of society and contribute to it. Teachers have a vital and fundamental role in education and at the heart of education are teachers. Teachers inspire young people and unlock their potential. Teachers enrich their countries and societies.

2. As a human right, education is special. It promotes other rights and responsibilities. Globally and at home, education can play a central role in the elimination of poverty. It has the power to help liberate not only individuals but also whole groups of people. These ideas have underpinned the policies and practices of the National Union of Teachers for over 130 years.

3. The NUT has always understood that lifelong education is vital both to society and to the economy. Today we recognise that, globally, many economies are developing exponentially. China, for example, is rapidly developing into a major manufacturing power. This is both a challenge to and an opportunity for our country. Education must play its part in making the most of that opportunity and rising to the challenges presented.

4. All young people must not only have equality of access to high quality education but they must also be able to learn new skills and disciplines throughout their adult lives. Education is vital to each young person. It is vital to every community in which they live.

5. This education statement by the National Union of Teachers is

based on our experience, knowledge and evidence of both national and international developments. Increasingly, countries understand that their social, cultural and economic health is dependent on the knowledge, learning and skills of their populations.

6. The latest Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report, 'Education at a Glance' reports that all OECD countries have seen a rise in the education levels of their citizens over the past decade and, in some, the increase has been spectacular. The NUT is committed to playing its part in raising still further the educational achievements of our children and young people in the UK, in Europe and across the world.

7. Indeed, the educational barriers between countries are coming down. A recent ground-breaking protocol agreed between the Government and Commonwealth countries seeks to protect the investments made in the training of teachers in developing countries.

8. At a global level, countries draw information and ideas from each other and, as governments learn from each other, so too do teacher organisations. Education International and other international organisations provide global forums and networks within which are promoted the fundamental values of equality of opportunity to high quality education are promoted. The depth of contact teachers have with each other, through their organisations, has never been greater or more vital.

9. 'Globalisation' itself certainly applies to education. The recent talks on the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATs) have involved fierce debates about

whether education should or should not be included within the global market. The NUT agrees unequivocally with Education International that, in order for all children and young people to fulfil their human right to education, education must be a public service, inspired by the values and ethos of public service and publicly provided.

10. Education in Wales needs all the different stakeholders to appreciate and live up to their responsibilities. This includes teachers, parents and, indeed, students. But for too long our education service has been undermined by short-term thinking. Too often, education has been used to make narrow party political points and score petty points. Education in Wales should reflect the confidence and credibility that flows from a broad participation and a sense of ownership by key stakeholders nationally and locally. In this statement, the NUT sets out proposals to draw on the support and contribution of teachers and their organisations, trade unions and employers' organisations, parents and students. Bringing down barriers needs to be the theme of education for our new century.

11. The NUT supported the ideal of a National Assembly for Wales. It is delighted that so many policies of the Welsh Assembly Government reflect its own. Both the NUT and WAG believe in the very best quality of education available for all in an inclusive system; an emphasis on assessment to support the teaching and learning processes; an end to diverse league tables and support for the LEAs as local democratically accountable bodies. Wales creates its own education policies and just as it is learning from other countries so are others learning a great deal from Wales.

12. The NUT stands firmly in support of a curriculum which reflects the richness and diversity of Wales. It supports the Curriculum Cymreig, which gives all pupils the opportunity to learn about the cultural, environmental, historic and linguistic characteristics of Wales in all their variety. It supports the right of all children in Wales to learn both the main languages, English and Welsh and it supports the right of parents to choose whether their children should be educated mainly through the medium of English or mainly through the medium of Welsh. The Welsh language, like the other many languages now spoken in the UK, enriches our society across the whole of the UK.

13. It is the NUT's intention in this statement to set out strategic proposals for the education service in Wales which it believes will enhance access to high quality education for all children and young people and which will develop the achievements of comprehensive education for the 21st Century.

14. The statement focuses on four key areas:

- an education service for all;
- the National Curriculum and its assessment;
- the teaching profession; and
- accountability.

15. The NUT's education statement is a contribution to the debate on how education in Wales can be carried forward for the next decade and in this new century. A separate and complementary statement is published for England.

education is a
fundamental
right

achieving equality of access



16. If an education service is to meet the needs of all children and young people, it must be comprehensive in its approach. Primary and special education are as much examples of the success of a comprehensive approach as secondary education. There is nothing 'standard' about comprehensive education. There is nothing in comprehensive education which holds back high expectations of young people's achievements. Comprehensive education can contribute as much to the talented and gifted child as to the child who is currently struggling to learn.

17. Comprehensive education is about tackling barriers to high quality education. No government committed to raising the living standards of its people and to playing a progressive role internationally can afford to have an education service which is shaped by barriers arising from, for example, the influence of social class and economic and health issues, race, gender, disability or sexuality. No civil society can permit itself to be anything other than vigilant in seeing that its leaders live up to their responsibilities.

18. The terms 'comprehensive education' and 'equality of opportunity' are synonymous. As the OECD's Programme of International Student Assessment

(2000) report demonstrates, the best education service is one where there is a single non-diverse system of well resourced provision within which the needs of all children and young people are targeted and met.

19. The NUT is delighted that the WAG recognises the value of comprehensive education and that it also agrees with the NUT that, within such a system, there should be a sustained attack on the root causes of social and economic deprivation. Save the Children has found that close to one in ten children still suffer from severe and persistent poverty, lasting for five years or more. Initiatives such as 'Sure Start' are both an important recognition of this fact and a real contribution to tackling a persistent and damaging feature of our society. Social class still has a powerful influence on the achievements of young people.

20. The NUT supports the WAG's decision to aim for joined up thinking – and joined up action – by creating a ministerial portfolio for Social Justice and Regeneration. This has facilitated joint action through the Communities First initiative – for example, the provision of free breakfasts for children in primary schools, currently in deprived areas but with the intention of provision for all primary school children in due

course. This demonstrates how initiatives in communities to tackle social and economic deprivation can link up to initiatives which tackle such deprivation in educational achievements.

21. The greatest potential for such joined up thinking lies in the widely welcomed 'Every Child Matters' agenda, which recognises and sustains the idea that every school is at the centre of its community. It is an approach that is equally important for urban and rural communities.

22. If schools are essential to their communities, then all parents should be entitled to send their children to good local schools and, in their turn, live up to the responsibilities that go alongside such entitlements. All the evidence points to the fact that this is the wish of the vast majority of parents. Indeed, local schools are enhanced by their communities and communities are enhanced by their local schools.

23. It would be profoundly pessimistic to assume that the idea of good local schools for every community is a less powerful idea than the concept of the right to choose schools. Indeed, the idea of "choice" can exacerbate social division. The NUT welcomed the speech made by First Minister Rhodri Morgan, 7 October 2004,

in which he criticised the notion of choice. The right to choose a school can only be used by those who have the capacity, often financial and sometimes geographical, to make such choices. Discrimination and economic and social disadvantage make the idea of school choice being equally available to all an illusion. Choice has real meaning when it is available to young people within schools. An entitlement curriculum and high quality teaching empowers young people to choose how and what to learn.

24. The next five years will be characterised by demographic changes that are now making their effects felt through falling school rolls. The education service should learn the lessons when from the past falling rolls affected schools. Proposals later in this statement refer to ways in which the education service could be further improved by using falling rolls to improve class sizes, for example. There needs to be effective, accountable and democratic decision making which responds positively to the effects of demographic change and which reflects the needs of local communities.

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schools, communities and local authorities

25. In order to ensure that every child and young person can achieve equality of access to good local schools, there must be a framework of provision that encourages and supports that principle. Local authorities leading their local communities are a key to that concept.

26. Only local authorities have the capacity to maintain and provide additional support to schools when and where it is needed. The involvement of the private sector in delivering core services at local educational authority level has been a failure in England. The NUT welcomes the fact that there are no widescale plans to outsource local services in Wales.

27. The most effective local authority does not operate from the citadel of a county or town hall but is one where employees, parents and governors are seen as part of the authority and with their organisations linking in partnership with the authority. Local authorities should continue to have a central role in providing services.

28. The WAG is exploring ways to increase collaboration between the 22 local education authorities (LEAs) on special educational needs in tandem with a general review of SEN services being conducted by the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee. LEAs have a vital role in planning and securing disability access in schools and colleges; individually or collaboratively, they can ensure provision in cases of low incidence of a particular need and can maintain behavioural support services. In addition, support for children from minority ethnic groups through the Ethnic Minority Achievement and the Traveller Grants is vital.

29. Thus, local authorities play an essential role in ensuring that all children and young people have equality of access to education. In short, local authorities should not only be quality assurers of education services but assurers of equality of access to education services.

schools

themselves must own the

development

of services

admissions

30. In order for there to be equality of access to education, there must be in place a fair and equitable admissions process. Common admissions arrangements are the key to achieving this goal. The NUT has consistently supported the concept of local admissions forums. Local admissions forums must have teeth however. No admissions procedure should be in place which advantages one school at the expense of another.

31. The development of Academies in England is a mistake. They have a capacity to undermine local communities of schools and the effectiveness of the local education authority's support. Sponsorship undermines democratic accountability and curriculum entitlement. Academy status promotes the message that, by virtue of the status and of capital investment, they are better than other schools - irrespective of the evidence. The NUT welcomes the fact that there are no plans to develop Academies in Wales.

32. If all schools were subject to common admissions procedures there would be no contradiction between schools developing individually and clusters of schools working together as appropriate. Common to both approaches would be the principle that families of schools should serve the needs of all pupils in each community.

Common admissions
arrangements are the

key

equality

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33. An effective education service is one which is able to respond to local needs. It is sustained by a coherent vision of equality. The vision of choice, on the other hand, has the capacity to exacerbate segregation, including segregation along ethnic lines. It is a concern recognised not only by the Welsh Assembly Government but also by the Home Office, for example, in its "Strategy on Common Cohesion and Race Equality". The Strategy says, rightly, that "greater choice in public services could lead to people exercising their choice in a way that leaves them living separate or parallel lives where they do not interact with people from different backgrounds".

34. The 'Save the Children' charity has found that there are close to 1 in 10 children still suffering from severe and persistent poverty lasting for five years or more. In Wales, the Union has welcomed the research that the Rowntree Foundation is undertaking on the effects of deprivation on children throughout Wales and is proud that it is involved in this work. It also looks forward to the fulfilment of the Assembly's intention to have Early Years' Centres in every LEA in Wales.

35. Whilst girls' examination successes are publicised and concerns expressed that boys are falling behind in a number of subject areas, hidden by that debate there is a generation of both young women and young men who have fallen through the education net completely and are considered lucky if they end up in low paid jobs. There is also a clear link between gender and child poverty across the whole of the UK. Both for women and men, economic inactivity is a major route into poverty but women face additional poverty risks as a result of their lower earning power, caring responsibilities and changing family structures. In Wales, the WAG therefore has a vital role in mainstreaming equality of opportunity.

the funding of education

36. While the mechanism for the WAG's funding allocation for education in Wales has to a certain extent been clarified – and that is welcome - the fundamental question about how to meet the basic and additional needs of schools has yet to be resolved.

37. Equality of access to education cannot be subject to short-term changes in funding. The NUT has welcomed, the fact that the recent draft budget for Wales was on a provisional three-year basis; this is generally helpful although some of the figures are not clear. Both additional transparency and longer-term budgets are welcome, but the amount allocated to education remains paramount. The United Kingdom Government has yet to achieve the objective of spending 5.9 per cent of the gross domestic product on education which is the OECD average.

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proposals

(a) > Schools' forums for advising local authorities on funding are at a varying stage of development. Their potential for providing excellent advice should be developed and all care taken to ensure that they are truly representative. Their membership should include representatives of parent, teacher and governor organisations.

(b) > Initiatives for the development of community schools should come from schools themselves. Audits should be conducted of additional services needed at school level by schools in conjunction with local authorities. With financial and logistical support from local authorities, schools would make proposals for developments. With funding support from the WAG, local authorities would be required to cost developments and guarantee funding, including capital funding.

(c) > Specific funding to support collaborative arrangements between schools should be available to schools from the WAG through the LEAs. Any specialist facilities developed by individual schools should be available to schools in the wider community.

(d) > Where schools are in difficulty, LEAs should be given the powers and financial capacity to provide long-term support within those schools. This proposal is developed further under the section on 'Accountability'.

(e) > The relationship between WAG policy developments and their costs needs to be clarified. The WAG should audit the cost of its statutory requirements and policy commitments for the education service. There is little evidence that the introduction of new policies is accompanied by a proper evaluation of their cost. Such a cost-evaluation should cover both existing costs of schools and the real term cost of introducing other services at school level, including capital costs.

(f) > The WAG should set up its own funding review group to establish a funding mechanism for schools and local education authority services, based on the actual costs that any requirements place on schools – that is, activity led funding. Membership of the group should be drawn from local and central government and from all teacher and support staff unions.

(g) > A separate funding review group should examine the role and capacity of local authorities to sustain across all services the needs of socially and economically disadvantaged communities. At a stage when initial work is completed, both groups would combine to agree coherent and joint findings to present to the WAG. Prior to the establishment of both groups, the WAG would commit itself to carrying through both approaches.

(h) > The United Kingdom Government should set out as an objective, as a minimum, the achievement of the OECD average of 5.9 per cent to be spent on education.

(i) > The WAG should continue and extend its support for collaborative work between LEAs.

schools
 would make
proposals
 for developments

Every child and young person, whatever their circumstances...

(j) > All local authorities should be required to retain a range of core services and provision. These are set out below.

- Core services for raising minority ethnic achievement should be maintained centrally by LEAs. The role of those services should be to provide support to schools and to pupils when and where necessary and also to provide professional development for teachers.

- With appropriate WAG funding, each LEA should be required to establish or be able to provide, through collaboration with neighbouring LEAs, a full range of special education provision, including Educational Psychology services, support services for specific special educational needs and a range of special schools. Each LEA's policy on inclusion should ensure that each aspect of its SEN provision is linked to each other and to mainstream schools. Each LEA should continue to be required to develop access to schools with a view to securing complete access for those with disabilities.

- Each LEA should be required to provide behaviour support services to schools, and to continue to have responsibility for providing an appropriate education for all pupils, including those who demonstrate unacceptable behaviour within mainstream schools, by maintaining schools or units for those with emotional and behavioural difficulties and pupil referral units. Every child and young person, whatever their circumstances, has a right to appropriate education provision.

- Likewise, Hospital and Home Services must be available as appropriate.

- Every school should have full access to all LEA services.

- In the context of new local authority responsibilities for vulnerable children, each LEA should appoint lead professionals whose role it would be to provide advice to schools - and to take action where necessary - when a vulnerable child had been identified. With schools and teacher organisations, LEAs should continue to develop practical policies on pupil behaviour, including policies on bullying and homophobic bullying. The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning has accepted the main recommendations of the Clywch enquiry by the Children's Commissioner. These are now being taken forward, with the NUT's support, to ensure that children and staff feel protected at schools in Wales.

(k) > At national level, the WAG should undertake comprehensive race equality impact assessments of their policy proposals and make them available for public scrutiny. The NUT would urge the WAG to implement the recommendation of the Home Office's Community Cohesion Panel that not only should the composition of school populations be monitored but that the WAG's Department for Training and Education (DfTE) should also establish strategies which encourage mixed-intake schools.

(l) > WAG should maintain and upgrade, in line with inflation and need, specific Ethnic Minority Achievement and Traveller Grants. A new, revised, national grant should be established for local education authorities to draw on when their schools experience significant increases in the number of children of refugees and asylum seekers. It is a concern that grants are usually allocated on a short-term basis thus causing employment problems for our members. It would be better to create a permanent pool of teachers with the necessary expertise in individual LEAs or in collaboration across county boundaries.

(m) > WAG is currently looking at the difficulties encountered by many parents in finding high quality and affordable childcare. In many cases, it is making it impossible for a parent to work. The NUT is involved in this work and urges WAG to develop a strategy for creating an entitlement and access for all to such childcare with the appropriate funding.

...has a right to
appropriate education
provision

"In respect of people's lives, the pace of change is unprecedented. Changes and attitudes to the environment and upheavals in international politics are occurring alongside economic and technological developments which have begun to transform the nature of work and organisation.

We need, therefore, a curriculum which, within a decade at most, redefines achievement away from its current narrow academic connotations, which encourages achievement for all and which promotes creativity, collaboration and a sense of adventure".



38. These words come from the introduction to the NUT's publication, "A Strategy for the Curriculum". They remain as fresh and as relevant today as they were when they were published in 1990. Since then, the National Curriculum has been subjected to a number of reviews leading to new statutory orders.

39. In Wales, Learning Pathways and the Welsh Baccalaureate are exploring breadth, balance and greater accessibility of provision for students aged 14-19 whilst a new Foundation Stage for children aged 3-7 has very recently started a pilot phase, with emphasis on the need for very young pupils to learn through play.

curriculum and assessment pre-14

40. For many teachers, a number of WAG initiatives have had a positive impact on their professional lives. In primary schools, standards in the core subjects have never been higher. And, as examination results demonstrate, secondary education has never been more successful for more young people than it is now. Despite its content overload, the concept of a National Curriculum is seen as having had a positive impact.

41. Set against this background, the National Curriculum and its assessment arrangements nevertheless still exert a range of pressures on teachers and schools.

42. In primary schools, the National Curriculum has put severe pressure on the notion of a broad and balanced curriculum, as noted in a

recent Estyn annual report on education in Wales. There has been a decline in the curriculum time available for creative subjects. National Curriculum and assessment pressures limit the time available to teachers to respond to pupils' individual needs and interests.

43. In secondary schools, there is strong evidence that teachers lack time for reflection and lack also professional space for observing and discussing with and learning from colleagues. Allied to this issue is the constant pressure of unacceptable behaviour from a minority of pupils. Young people in years 7 and 8 themselves believe that the curriculum does not encourage variety, enjoyment and engagement. As Cambridge

University has detected, there is "an intrinsic relationship between pupil behaviour, high class sizes, inappropriate curriculum, pressure to meet targets and keeping up with initiatives".

44. There are other pressures on teaching and learning arising from the current National Curriculum and its assessment. Despite the inclusion statements in the National Curriculum, equality is still not at its heart. The National Curriculum does not easily facilitate the preparation of pupils for adult life in a diverse society and in a global context. Neither does it encourage fulfilment of specific needs such as those of minority ethnic pupils and those from socially and economically deprived backgrounds.

45. The introduction of Citizenship is welcome as part of the Personal and Social Education programme in Wales, but the lack of curriculum space and flexibility means that it is still not integral to an already overloaded curriculum. The curriculum must provide schools with the confidence to tackle discrimination, including racism, sexism and homophobic bullying. International evidence shows that equal opportunities policies raise standards, but they cannot work as effectively as they might if the curriculum acts as a restraint rather than an encouragement.

National Curriculum
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bringing down the barriers

part two: the national curriculum and its assessment

the curriculum post-14

46. The piecemeal reduction in the number of statutory subject orders post-14 has failed both to achieve the aim of offering all young people a broad and balanced curriculum and to tackle effectively the vocational and occupational skills deficit. The idea of vocational GCSEs, the Learning Pathways initiative and the Welsh Baccalaureate are partial first steps heralding the possibility of achieving the removal of the academic/vocational divide but their introduction has not, as yet, tackled successfully the issue of how to guarantee curricula entitlement. The plight of modern foreign languages, Welsh as a Second Language and technology for students post-14 is an example of the urgency with which the 14-19 curriculum has to be tackled.

47. The proposals that the NUT has set out under this section are predicated therefore on the view that there has to be an end to imposed change in curriculum and assessment - any change must be supported by teachers and school communities.

the
road to
equality

proposals

(a) > Currently, the National Curriculum is both overloaded and narrow. The prescribed detail of the National Curriculum does not encourage depth of learning. By its very prescription, it restricts access to new areas of knowledge and the capacity to construct imaginatively areas of teaching and learning which cross traditional subject barriers. It fails also to encourage an entitlement to educational experiences outside school, including the benefit of residential experiences. The National Curriculum must provide a framework for describing young people's entitlement to learning in broad terms.

(b) > The present distinction between the core and foundation subjects should be abolished and be replaced by a framework curriculum. A framework curriculum should describe a common entitlement for young people and the support necessary for their learning. It should also provide a scaffolding for the development of teachers' creativity and enthusiasm for their own learning.

(c) > In Wales, ACCAC has recently presented advice following its latest cyclical review of the curriculum and its assessment. For the time being, it does not advocate major changes but rather sets out a 'vision ... of a curriculum that is more inclusive, and better prepares young people for life and work'. It also recommends that 'the Welsh Assembly Government should consider, as a long-term goal, the vision of a radically revised curriculum that is more overtly learner-centred and skills-focused, and not necessarily subject-based'. Strong words indeed! The NUT looks forward to playing a full part in the discussions to come and in ensuring a curriculum that better meets the needs of children and young people and one which promotes equality.

(d) > The notion of child-centred learning and the requirement to differentiate teaching according to need is certainly not a new one. Meeting the individual needs of each child and young person is an aspiration to which all those involved in education can sign up. The NUT believes that one thing is clear however: without a fundamental review of the National Curriculum and its assessment arrangements, "personalised learning" as an aspiration will remain just that - an aspiration. It is delighted, therefore, to support ACCAC's recommendation of a thorough overhaul so that the curriculum becomes learner-centred. This could lead to a guaranteed entitlement for all pupils including personal tuition arrangements and involvement in a minimum number of outdoor activities and visits to museums and galleries.

(e) > The framework envisaged by the Union would describe a range of statutory entitlements including literacy (in both Welsh and English), numeracy, science and technology, the creative arts, the humanities (including a knowledge of global developments), information and communication technology and modern foreign languages.

(f) > A statutory framework would encourage new approaches to cross-curricula learning, such as thinking skills, environmental learning, learning about industry and manufacturing, citizenship and personal and social education, including healthy living and the importance of exercise.

(g) > Integral to the new framework would be specific references to the needs of young people from minority ethnic backgrounds, the needs of children from socially and economically deprived backgrounds and those with special educational needs and disabilities. The new framework curriculum would specifically encourage teachers to adapt the curriculum to meet the specific needs of pupils, without requiring teachers to demonstrate artificially that they had covered the content of the National Curriculum. Much of the content of the current statutory curriculum would be re-designated as having an advisory status.

(h) > On the issue of transition between primary and secondary schools, the Union is expecting imminently a WAG consultation on guidance for transition, following the allocation of grants for pilot strategies to improve practice. We look forward to making our input.

(i) > The current structure of Key Stages 2 and 3 does not act in favour of curriculum continuity between primary and secondary schools; neither is there, in general, a recognition in the two Key Stages of the different ways primary and secondary schools are organised. There is a strong argument for a curriculum which supports flexibility in the organisation of teaching, so that primary schools are able to introduce specialist teaching alongside class teaching and so that secondary schools can provide specific support for pupils in years 7 and 8 who are not ready for a full curriculum range. It is essential that a new framework curriculum supports the development of links between primary and secondary schools.

(j) > The organisation of secondary schools at Key Stage 3 is determined largely by the current subject requirements. The removal of much of the specific statutory curriculum content requirements at Key Stage 3 will necessarily be part of the overall review of the content overload in the 5-14 National Curriculum.

(k) > The review of assessment in Wales, conducted by Professor Richard Daugherty and his Review Group, is a model of which we are proud and from which others should learn. The NUT fully supports the views of the Group that the prime purpose of assessment is to aid learning.

(l) > In its policy document, 'The Road to Equality', published as early as 1996, the NUT set out a framework broadly similar to that being piloted by the Welsh Baccalaureate and more recently proposed by Tomlinson in his 14-19 review in England. Thus the NUT supports the principle of the diploma and its accompanying structure. It is supporting - and keeping an eagle eye on - developments in the Welsh Baccalaureate. There are still major issues to be resolved, however, including the breadth and depth of curriculum entitlement for all young people. The six principles which the NUT set out as a precondition for 14-19 reform have largely been adopted both in the Welsh Baccalaureate and by Tomlinson. The cost of these arrangements must, however, be met by new money. Thorough audits of the actual cost implications of the Welsh Baccalaureate must be conducted.

(m) > It is essential that 14-19 reform should have continuity over time. The NUT would propose therefore the establishment of an implementation body to oversee the Welsh Baccalaureate arrangements and any implications for Wales of the post-Tomlinson arrangements in England. A broad range of representation from teacher organisations, the Wales TUC, the WJEC, ACCAC, CBI Wales and the Universities and the WAG would be included in its membership. Its job would be to provide a forum and sounding board for any potential problems arising from the practical implementation of change.

the
national curriculum
can only provide a
framework
for the practical realities of
learning and
teaching



48. The NUT has argued consistently for the establishment of an all-graduate teaching profession. Integral to comprehensive education is a teaching profession with a capacity to respond to the needs of local communities yet, at the same time, a profession with a national identity and voice. Now more than ever, teaching is linked nationally through developments in information and communications technology and access to a common bank of knowledge about learning.

49. In order to maintain the high standards expected by parents and young people, continuing professional development has to be part of each teacher's contractual entitlement. The National Curriculum can only provide a framework for the practical realities of teaching and learning; teachers' professionalism is defined by their knowledge, skills, experience, training and professional development.

50. It is through an entitlement to continuing professional development (CPD), one integral to and not additional to teachers' workloads, that teachers' enthusiasm and commitment to teaching can be enhanced. Such an approach would also reduce the still unacceptably high rate of teacher turnover and loss to the profession.

51. The NUT is committed fundamentally to establishing for teachers an entitlement to CPD. The evidence from the NUT's own CPD programme is that CPD, valued and owned by teachers, enhances professional confidence, morale and learning. If appraisal is to mean anything, it has to deliver CPD as a professional entitlement - not as an imposition.

52. There are many layers to CPD, some of which will be the product of Government legislation, such as the new Children Act. The school as an institution will have professional development priorities. Also, fundamentally, professional development identified, chosen and owned by teachers themselves is the key to high morale, motivation and confidence among teachers.

53. In Wales, there has been an enthusiastic response to the opportunities offered by the General Teaching Council for Wales' range of bursaries for CPD. The NUT was particularly pleased at the response from teachers and the support from GTC Wales for its own programme of overseas study visits funded by this route. The bursaries varied from whole school activities to meeting the individual needs or simply interests of teachers. We regret that the amount of funding available has been reduced for 2005-6 and are urging that it be restored to its previous level.

54. Nevertheless, the funding provided indicated that, at long last, an acknowledgement of the 1971 James Report's view that, throughout their careers, teachers should have the time, space and funding to reflect, research and develop their practice. There is strong evidence, for example, that teachers who take a year's professional development in another country, whether through the Voluntary Service Overseas or other means, return with refreshed motivation and new ideas. In turn, overseas trained teachers have specific needs. The NUT believes that we can still learn from James' original vision and commitment and that these should still be the cornerstone of CPD policy.

55. Yet many teachers do not have sufficient time to carry out sustained CPD and there is an unacceptable variation between teachers and between schools in the time available to them. The NUT believes that this wide variation in the capacity of schools to use their budgets for CPD exists mainly because their capacity to fund it also varies widely. Only an equitable and dedicated funding entitlement for each teacher can remove this wide variation.

proposals

each teacher should be entitled to a 1 term sabbatical

(a) > Each teacher should receive a material entitlement to continuing professional development. This entitlement capacity should be made available in two forms: through guaranteed time made available during the timetabled teaching day and through securing an individual funding entitlement for all teachers and headteachers. Both entitlements will need to be quantified. In making its own proposals to the STRB, the NUT has called on it to review the impact of CPD arrangements in Scotland, including the Chartered Teachers' scheme. It welcomes the fact that GTC Wales, in conjunction with the WAG, is already exploring this avenue.

(b) > GTC Wales has started work on constructing a Professional Development Framework for teachers. It builds on its experience so far with the funding programme. The Framework takes into account the individual needs of all teachers at whatever level or phase for CPD, the existence of existing qualifications, such as the National Professional Qualification for Headteachers, and the guaranteed and funded opportunities now in existence for early professional development (EPD). The NUT welcomes the fact that it is involved in this process. The Framework should provide the ideal complement to a national strategy for CPD in Wales.

(c) > The NUT believes that the WAG should also build on its work on CPD during the early years of teaching to create a national

strategy for CPD. All teacher organisations in Wales, alongside GTC Wales, should be asked to collaborate in establishing a set of proposals, the purpose of which would be to secure guaranteed and continuous professional development for teachers throughout their careers. The strategy would take into account the need to encourage teachers to conduct their own research on what works in teaching. The NUT's proposals, set out below, are intended to contribute to the development of the strategies.

(d) > The role of Higher Education would need to be evaluated in terms of providing mentoring for those teachers who undertake research. Specific financial incentives should be given to Teacher Training partnerships and School Centred Initial Teacher Training in order to develop teams of trained research mentors whose responsibility would be to provide skilled and practical guidance to teacher researchers.

(e) > All teachers should receive consistent updating in developments in their disciplines and subject areas, including professional development in the use of Information and Communications Technology. Any review of current provision must focus on developing peer coaching and the ability of teachers with specific skills to train others. Guaranteed time during the school day should enable teachers to share their practice with teachers in other schools.

(f) > The experience of the NUT's CPD programme is that teachers respect their Unions' capacity to deliver high quality CPD - an experience replicated in the United States, where both the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association are given school-board and state-wide funding to deliver full and ongoing programmes for teachers.

(g) > The funding model for delivering an entitlement to CPD must focus on ensuring that each school receives a dedicated sum sufficient to meet the needs of all its teachers. Each school should receive a minimum funding entitlement of £1,000 - at current prices - for personal professional development for each teacher, each year. In Wales, this is what the WAG now provides for the first year of EPD. In addition, each teacher should be entitled to a one-term sabbatical once every seven years of teaching to conduct their own research into effective classroom practice. Sufficient scholarships should be made available through LEAs to meet this entitlement.

(h) > In the context of the agreement reached recently by Commonwealth countries on a teacher recruitment protocol, the WAG, in collaboration with the DfES, should make available through Voluntary Service Overseas and the British Council a range of opportunities for experienced teachers to work in developing countries for a year. The scholarship programme would include the allocation to LEAs of scholarships for professional development

overseas with the number of such scholarships determined by the number of schools in each LEA. The criteria for the award of these scholarships would be based on the potential for CPD links to be developed between schools in Wales and England and schools in developing countries. In this context, NUT Cymru, through Dolen Cymru, has already established its own strong links not only with schools in Lesotho but also with the Lesotho Government and trade union movement.

56. High standards in Initial Teaching Training and high quality continuing professional development for teachers as an entitlement, alongside a framework curriculum and assessment which supports learning and creativity, would provide the bedrock for the future success of the education service.

57. The NUT believes that the proposals in this statement will enhance teaching and learning. Certainly, evidence from the OECD and from elsewhere demonstrates that a trusted teaching profession, one receiving high standards of training and continuing professional development, contributes to high levels of achievement for all children and young people.

teaching numbers and class size

58. The full effects of high quality teaching can only be achieved if there are sufficient teachers in each school and if class and group sizes are small enough for teachers to give attention to every child's needs. The NUT has been at the forefront of seeking to reduce the stress caused by imposed and excessive workload. At the NUT's initiative, delegates at the Trade Union Congress agreed unanimously to evaluate the workload reforms. In the context of that evaluation, it is clear that the Westminster Government should adopt a number of strategies.

personalise learning

proposals

teaching is a highly skilled responsibility

(a) > Government regulations have defined the role of support staff in carrying out specified work. There is a vital need to define the core characteristics of the work of practising qualified teachers. Such a definition should be based on the principle that teaching is a highly skilled responsibility extending across a broad range of professional skills. The creation of such a definition would provide a benchmark for headteachers and governing bodies in their decisions about the teacher and support staff structures in schools. Approval should be sought for regulations identifying the work of qualified teachers alongside separate regulations identifying the work of support staff.

(b) > Each school and pupil referral unit should be required to employ a minimum number of teachers. The basic number of teachers for each institution should be defined by maximum class and group size limits, appropriate distinctions between the work of teachers and support staff, a statutory curriculum framework which requires a balanced and broadly based curriculum, and the personal and social needs of children and young people.

A separate section in this document makes proposals for the adoption of activity-led funding which would help define the staffing needs of schools.

(c) > The Welsh Assembly Government should publish legislation setting maximum class sizes for the whole of the 3-19 age range and requiring further reductions for class sizes at Key Stage 1.

(d) > Falling pupil rolls should represent an opportunity, not a threat. They represent an opportunity to:

- reduce class sizes and improve the conditions of service of teachers and support staff;
- improve the ability of teachers to meet the individual learning needs of children and young people;
- expand curriculum opportunities and provide time for professional development and liaison between staff;
- establish productive links with parents, with other schools and with local communities;

- liaise with other services at school and local authority level on how to meet the needs of vulnerable children;

- establish productive links between schools and local employers.

(e) > In recognising such opportunities, governments in England and Wales should establish annually the total number of teachers and support staff to be employed. The total figure should be informed by the opportunities set out above, the target totals costed in the annual Local Government Finance Settlement, the need to retain enough flexibility to meet changing needs and not cause disruption to schools through regular fluctuations in staff numbers.

(f) > The latest publicly available figures show that almost half of all teachers were aged 45 or over in 2002. The WAG needs therefore to initiate a major and thorough investigation into the future supply of teachers for the next 10-15 years.

inspection arrangements could be a step in the right direction



59. Accountability for the effective functioning of the education service is a legitimate requirement of both local communities and government but the current inspection system is permeated by a lack of trust. Parents and pupils have the right to expect a fair and accurate system of accountability.

60. Although Estyn has moved some way from punitive approaches to inspection, the consequences of schools being placed in 'special measures' are dire. Despite reforms, including attempts to reduce pre-inspection demands, the root causes of pre-inspection anxiety and post-inspection slump among teachers have not been removed. Judgement that a school is 'failing' or 'giving concern', triggered often by low tests and examination results, leads

to career blight, excessive workload and, often, for teachers in schools in 'special measures', transfer to another school or complete change of career.

61. The issue of the evaluation of schools is complex. The NUT has led the way in seeking to secure school evaluation which supports, not punishes, schools. School self-evaluation is now intrinsic to inspection.

62. The response of teachers to this has been mixed. They believe that this reform in inspection arrangements could be a step in the right direction but self-evaluation is only supported by teachers if it supports their own teaching and is not there to meet the needs of an inspection system.

63. The future of school evaluation is therefore on a cusp. The prime purpose of the reform - to gain acceptance for school inspection by school communities - has a long way to go, although this and other reforms have ameliorated some of the harder edges of inspection. As teachers support teacher assessment, so they support self-evaluation; but if imposed, both approaches could bite the profession that supports them. It is quite possible to turn both school self-evaluation and teacher assessment into imposed and rigid regulatory regimes internal to schools. School self-evaluation has the capacity to turn into school self-inspection, with the head teacher playing the role of internal inspector. These potential developments must not occur.

64. Teachers' judgements need to be at the centre of assessment and evaluation. The evidence from countries which have adopted 'bottom up' self-evaluation is that such approaches have contributed to high levels of achievement for the vast majority of young people. Where teachers' own assessment and evaluation take place, standards go up, not down.

65. The NUT's proposals for a new approach to accountability are based on evidence. Their purpose is to accelerate reforms which will benefit schools and support teaching and learning.

proposals

(a) > The data available from assessment and examination results should feed into school evaluation reports as they do in current inspection reports. To meet understandable government need for a summative picture of the effectiveness of the education service, the WAG should establish an Assessment of Performance Unit. It would be able to summarise data and also ask questions through studies based on sampling. It would operate independently, with an advisory board including teacher and support staff unions, the Wales TUC, the Wales CBI, the DfTE, ACCAC and the WJEC. It would respond to requests for national evidence on standards within schools and colleges.

(b) > The terms, "special measures" and "significant weaknesses" should be abolished. They should be replaced by the term "schools in need of additional support". Such support could involve external support. If external evaluation identifies problems in a school, then the LEA should be required to provide support, including providing advisers and seconded teachers to be based in the school. There should be no "one-size-fits-all" deadline for improvement.

(c) > In Wales, HMI still exists as an independent body. In Wales, too, LEA consortia act on a number of levels. In Wales, therefore, it would be sensible to utilise this well-established collaboration between LEAs in the reform of the inspection processes. The individual LEAs would continue to provide their own schools with advice and support and monitor their provision and progress. Through established consortia protocols, teams from LEAs would then evaluate schools' performance in a neutral and unbiased way. In turn, HMI would continue to monitor the LEAs, including the effectiveness of individual LEAs' school monitoring processes and that of the consortia. There would therefore be no need to continue the six-yearly cycle of expensive external inspection by privatised teams of Estyn-registered inspectors – and the money saved could be spent on schools.

(d) > Open and public accountability for schools should be predicated on an evaluation system that results in fair and accurate judgements. A new system of school evaluation would have, as part of the system, an open and separate appeals procedure so that schools which disagree either with the procedure or content of judgements, or both, could appeal. The results of appeals would uphold, modify or overturn the initial judgements.

66. There should be one single form of institutional evaluation: school self-evaluation. Institutional evaluations should be developmental, not punitive. Punitive evaluation does not strengthen schools; it leaves them fragile. Assessment of the curriculum should be focused on supporting learning, not carrying out a task for which it is inherently unsuited - that of being a proxy for evaluating schools.

67. The proposals which the NUT has set out above provide a framework for a new system of accountability for schools and, indeed, colleges - a framework which supports schools, not undermines them, and which contributes to the quality of the education service.

assessment
of the curriculum
should be
focused
on supporting learning

conclusion



68. Four themes have informed the NUT's proposals in 'Bringing down the Barriers'.

Education is a powerful force in securing equal life chances. Local communities and local authorities should underpin equality of access to education for all children and young people.

All schools need to have the confidence to innovate and draw on the professionalism of all their staff. A curriculum and assessment system which encourages innovation is vital.

For teachers to own change, their professionalism must be drawn on and enhanced. At the centre of teachers' professionalism must be equality of entitlement to professional development.

The wider public, as well as government, have a right to know how effective the education service is. It is quite possible for accountability to be both rigorous and support schools.

69. 'Bringing down the Barriers' is about proposing practical policies which will work. This Statement recognises that education is indeed at the heart of everything we value in society.

proposing practical policies which will work



bringing down the barriers

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