



FREE STATES

LIBERTARIAN PARTY UK MANIFESTO 2019
EDUCATION POLICY



**LIBERTARIAN
PARTY**

FOREWORD

The Libertarian Party believes that we are at a cross roads in British Politics in which the next few years will decide the direction of travel for the foreseeable future. The parties who make up the Westminster cable have shown that they believe that the people are there to serve them, not the other way round.

We are entering a period in which the two main parties are descending to their extremes which for the Conservative Party is in-fighting, and chaos, and an abandonment of the free market. For Labour it is a push to take private property by force, for example, to nationalise healthy companies in an ideological shake-down as well as to add an ever increasing burden of taxation on middle earners and future generations, yet at the same time stoking class divisions to ensure

there is always someone else to blame.

Luckily we are also seeing a great deal of awareness in the general public who are starting to see how rigged the system is and are looking for an alternative. We are that alternative. We are the party that puts the rights of the individuals ahead of the rights of unions or donors. We are the party that will remove barriers to trade allowing the economy to stand on its own feet unencumbered by unnecessary regulations. We are the party that wants to remove political interference from your everyday life, freeing important services like Health Care and Education from political point scoring and putting them in the hands of the service providers or users: the people who know what is most needed. We are the party that

wants to ensure that this country has a Constitution that protects the individual and treats all parts of the country in an even manner.

In this Manifesto we will set out our policies for a future federal United Kingdom where power is devolved wherever possible and innovative, modern solutions are used to create the good in an efficient way (in place of that which is beloved by the other parties: the status quo).

The Manifesto of the Libertarian Party has been built on five basic principles.

That the overall effect of all our policies together shall decrease the size and power of the state.

That the rights of the individual are paramount and should be nurtured.

That the individual is better

placed to understand what is in their best interest than the state.

That those who have power must be held accountable for their actions.

That power should be devolved so it is as close to the people who are affected by it as possible.

Alongside these principles we have also called on the experience of other countries basing our policies, wherever possible, on systems that have been tried and tested elsewhere and which the evidence shows work well.

This Manifesto provides an alternative to more of the same, a pathway away from the Westminster rule we know to somewhere more prosperous, less authoritarian and less dangerous, more protective of the citizen and

less willing to boss her around for her own good or, as is more commonly the case, to her harm.

Our respect for each individual is embodied in the procedures of our party, such as our policy creation procedure, declared in the policies in our Manifesto which fuels the lamp with which we light the way to the place where we hope you will find your political home as a member, or supporter, of the Libertarian Party UK. We are the party that will set you personally above the collective and by doing so free the country to be better than ever before.

Adam Brown
Party Leader



EDUCATION FREEDOM TO PURSUE

A Libertarian government will leave students the freedom to pursue alternative educational avenues.

The Libertarian education system will fulfil the following three simple objectives:

Give parents authority over their children's educational choices.

Break-up the de facto state education monopoly.

Grant increased autonomy to education providers, whilst imposing only a limited collection of mandatory 'core'

subjects (English, Mathematics and Science) up to sixteen.

A Libertarian government will give students the freedom to pursue other educational avenues such as apprenticeships at sixteen years of age and thereafter. We will also diminish or abolish centralised targets for schools instead allowing schools to set their own goals.

Education spending, at about 4.3% of gross domestic product or £90 billion (2017-18), was the fourth largest element of public spending behind pensions, welfare and health. Clearly education is expensive. Whilst the Libertarian Party advocates low taxes our aim is an excellent education system. Cost-saving is not a direct aim of our policies, instead it a useful by-product.

EARLY YEARS

Spending on the early years area of education has risen over the last 30 years, from about £100 million in the early 1990s to about £5.8 billion in 2017-18. Much of this (£3.5 billion in 2017-18) finances free entitlement to part-time early years education and childcare. These increases have mainly reflected more hours of childcare being provided most recently, for

the majority of working parents, thirty hours (2017-18). Demand has grown to meet the increasing level of free entitlement.

The problem with the system is that it incorrectly presumes the choices people will make (not everyone has children or necessarily wants their child looked after by someone else). Everyone is compelled to fund this free entitlement through taxation.

Many working parents question the need for fifteen hours of child care for non-working parents who may not need childcare at all. The policy is arbitrary and clumsy.

As the Nuffield 2018 Annual Report on Education Spending in England states, "there are two main related challenges for early years funding over the next few years. First, successful implementation of the new 30

Working parents question the need for fifteen hours of child care for non-working parents.

hours extended entitlement will require providers to be willing to offer it, given the funding available. To date, many have, but there is significant geographical variation in take-up rates.”

There are many reasons why the government is facing “variation in take-up”. In any case, even with government funding – the strict regulation (also imposed by the government) to do with ratios of providers to children and the inspection regime discourages providers from offering places - especially to younger children. Arguably what the government contributes does not fully cover the hourly cost of a nursery place

either, so even with all this spending – it isn’t enough. Parents are therefore forced to top up the cost of places themselves or else risk struggling to find any childcare at all. The use of ‘tax-free’ childcare accounts through HMRC is not without technical and administrative problems. This nicely demonstrates how government intervention and ‘assistance’ is actually harmful in reducing parental choices and increasing costs for all.

The Nuffield Report continues “Second, it is not clear how and whether the new Early Years National Funding Formula can be

used to promote high-quality provision. Whilst the new funding system is welcome in ensuring transparency and consistency in funding allocations, it is currently difficult for the funding formula to incentivise and support high-quality provision as there is no agreed definition of ‘high-quality’ provision. A focus on minimising costs could have unintended consequences by making it more difficult for childcare settings to provide high-quality care that supports children’s development.” Whilst opinions on ‘high quality’ may differ, regulations do not – and with strict ratios of carers to children imposed on providers, it is hardly surprising many places are finding it tough to provide care at all. It is also worth noting that the ubiquitous term ‘high-quality’ is inherently subjective when dealing with care, versus education. One parent’s idea of high quality care (stimulating educational visits, games, constant interaction) may work well for one child, but could be potentially disastrous for another who may find the whole experience of nursery

overwhelming.

SCHOOLS

Funding is distributed to local authorities who decide how to allocate it to schools in their areas according to local formulae. The implementation of a full school-level national funding formula has been put off until at least 2021, which is unsurprising as in the pursuit of fairness this will produce a blunt straight jacket of over-complexity just as it has for the ‘early years’.

When school rolls increase, schools attract additional per pupil funding. This results in many state schools being crammed with students so as to attain funding in a desperate attempt to balance the books without thought. With increasing class sizes, decreasing teacher numbers and difficulty in satisfying “Special Education Needs” pupils – state schools (particularly secondary state schools) arguably attract as many problems as they solve for a significant number of students who are expelled, distressed or merely drift to the back of the class where they learn little.

Whilst the state school system works for some, it clearly doesn't work for everyone. Educational establishments in the independent sector and home education – thankfully – bridge some of the gap between the education society desires and what is attained. All the while, state spending on education is still increasing.

There is also the controversial 'pupil premium' where government directs funds to schools with pupils with particular needs. Despite these measures, the Education Select Committee has recently launched an inquiry into the funding of schools and colleges. Clearly, even with the best intentions, costs continually rise and the system isn't working for everyone.

Whilst political parties and governments are making a political football out of education, significant change at rapid pace has occurred under driving governments and comes with its own costs. The numbers of students in secondary school is currently rising, yet the number of teachers is not keeping up. Whilst

salary increases have recently come in effect to mitigate teacher losses, it has been argued these are 'misplaced and over-generous' – according to the Taxpayers' Alliance – in light of the perks afforded to public sector workers over the private sector. With the many conflicting headlines, opinions and the natural divergence in children's educational needs, teachers' altering working conditions and disputes over parental prerogative – we have ended up with a sector run on emotion not logic. It is not surprising we now have an education system with increasing costs but mixed results.

The Libertarian Party believes the main problem with education is its inflexibility. Prescriptive elements which purport to fit individuals into one mould do not work with a population as diverse as ours.

FURTHER EDUCATION

By 16, young people can continue in full-time education at a school sixth form, sixth-form college or further education college. Of those continuing in full-time

We now have an education system with increasing costs but mixed results.

education, most will take A levels. However, there is a vast range of other vocational qualifications on offer, particularly at further education colleges. Young people can combine part-time work and education or training, including in an apprenticeship. Historically, many young people have also opted to move straight into paid employment, though this has become less common over time. Nonetheless, these alternatives are ones a Libertarian government would keep open.

The further education sector also provides education and training for adults, which has historically been the main focus of the sector. There are a broad range of education and training options available for adults, including

formal education qualifications in classroom-based settings (usually taken part-time), apprenticeships and shorter training courses, as well as basic courses in English and Maths. This we would not mess with.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Under the current higher education (HE) funding system in England, it costs around £17 billion to fund the education of each cohort of undergraduate students. This includes the cost of teaching for three or more years and funding towards the cost of living while at university for more than 350,000 students.

Initially, this cost is funded entirely from government finances. In the long run,

however, graduates make repayments on their student loans and the cost is split between taxpayers and students (although in practice most students never fully repay their loan).

Few students have to pay tuition fees up front. Most students can take out government-backed loans to cover the full cost of tuition fees and contribute towards the cost of living (to do so, they must be UK domiciled and taking their first undergraduate degree). These loans are repaid on an income-contingent basis; graduates repay a proportion of their income over a certain threshold and any outstanding loan is written off at the end of the repayment period. This system ensures that high-

earning graduates contribute towards the cost of their degrees and there is insurance for graduates who have periods of low earnings. This has not always been the case. In the 1990s, provision was funded through direct teaching grants paid to universities by government while graduates did not contribute toward the cost of higher degrees. Sequential reforms in 1998, 2006 and 2012 introduced and increased tuition fees. These reforms, alongside the relaxation of controls on the number of students that universities could accept, have served to create a quasi-market in which universities compete to attract new students.

This system is expensive for taxpayers and does little to

educate people in prudence. It teaches people the government will pay for their choice – even if, after paying for it, that person may not be able to use it to secure a viable career afterwards, let alone repay their loan. It also ignores the utility of certain degrees (Engineering, Medicine) and seems to equate them with degrees which, whilst thoroughly interesting and culturally valuable, do not result in a viable career (e.g. some arts subjects, and spurious courses such as ‘Gender Studies’). Some people would say recent moves to higher student interest rates on loan repayments are immoral, for sure many people cannot reasonably hope to pay off their loans, let alone interest, and not least thanks to further tax hikes (to pay for more students to study).

A Libertarian government will encourage sponsorship, bursaries, scholarships and bonds by all sectors of the economy to free the Universities, Polytechnics and Technical Colleges from state interference.

This system is expensive for taxpayers and does little to educate people in prudence.



1. ABOLITION OF COMPULSORY EDUCATION AND COMPULSORY INSPECTION FOR CHILDREN UNDER SEVEN YEARS OF AGE

The Finnish education system, one of the most effective in the world, produces happy children who do not begin their formal schooling before this age – and we believe this is a big reason why.

BENEFITS

Parents may choose what is best for their own children up to this age – whether that is for parents to enjoy better living through a low cost Libertarian world, and have a parent stay at home to care for their children, or employ a child-minder, or an alternative childcare provider (who doesn't make arbitrary claims of 'free' hours).

NOTES

The Libertarian government will scale back most regulation of childcare providers, remove arbitrary minder-child ratios and government inspections. This would increase the number of childcare providers entering the market-place and reduce childcare costs. This would help many parents, especially when we consider that childcare costs for a two child couple are the most expensive in the world! It would also incentivise much needed, yet maligned child-minders who have cared for many children, often alongside their own. This was before the advent of the 2008 regulations, Ofsted inspections and ensuing increased training costs and procedures which drove many out of the role. We would

replace the current system with a voucher based one, "A Scholarship for every Child", with top up options available to parents to facilitate personal preferences. Our system will give all parents (regardless of earnings and circumstance) the power of choice with their resources and the best providers the freedom to care for children without state interference. The market will decide which providers are successful and which are not, giving back the power to parents. Our aim is to enable parents to hold providers to account and, if found wanting, to take their business elsewhere. We would scrap current early years spending. In place of £5.5 billion of spending would be the voucher option (described in more detail below).



2. A SCHOLARSHIP FOR EVERY CHILD

A Libertarian government will provide vouchers to all parents to cover the cost of their child's early years and secondary education, and give them the option to top up the voucher to pay for superior providers. This will lead to a true marketplace in school education.

BENEFITS

When the market moved by parental choice holds schools to account, and parents can vote over education with their feet, higher quality education will increase naturally and lowest quality fall by the way.

NOTES

The Libertarian government will nurture a surplus of places to facilitate the power of parental choice. Poorly performing schools will either reform and improve, be absorbed by others, or simply close due to lack of parental support (if vouchers are "spent" elsewhere). Coupled with this, we will add a component essential to any successful voucher system – we will enable people to found schools wherever they wish and for existing schools to opt out of direct state control. We do not envisage a mass sell-off of state assets, but a switch to independent not-for-profit and private entities competing openly. Independent schools will be free to set up wherever they wish.

A Libertarian government will remove targets for grades and funding and end centrally imposed targets. The arbiters of any education system should be students, parents and employers, so that the onus is on the individual to aspire, parents to pressure, the institution to facilitate and the employer to select their preferred candidates. The state's role will then be redundant.

Exam boards will be freed from government grade gerrymandering

and schools will be free to adopt the exam boards of their choice. Ofqual could be transferred out of government and be funded by schools to administer exams. This will place schools and the exam board in a direct relationship with each other to foster expertise, undistracted by the state.

Selection, setting and streaming must be the decision of the individual schools – after all, each school and its demographic – is different.

A Libertarian government will insist on the abolition of all unnecessary quangos in education, most notably – Ofsted, which is fit to cause distress and disillusionment to education professionals and little else. The private sector have their own inspectorate – ISI – who are nothing like Ofsted. We will see that inspections are a voluntary process for institutions (though publishing the results could be mandatory) who wish to inspire confidence in parents.

Some parents pay to send their children to private schools and results are good. These schools are inspected by ISI, so all schools could be inspected by ISI instead, if they wished.

The abolition of unnecessary quangos has saved the taxpayer quite a sum of money already, but we would go further. We shall remove from Local Education Authorities their veto and control over the establishment, funding and administration of schools. This will render arbitrary and confusing government 'funding formulae', which the government itself cannot seem to fathom (as mentioned above under 'early years') redundant.

We shall encourage and promote home education and online learning platforms (after all, students are using the latter already). As people are individuals, their education should also be unique and tailored according to their wishes and needs. There shall be no stigma to 'home education' - children are not invisible if they are being taught at home. We advocate this method of learning as one of many educational choices, alongside the burgeoning online education market (of which there are many innovative ways for parents to spend their vouchers on education).

3. REPEAL COMPULSORY EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR SEVENTEEN AND EIGHTEEN YEAR OLDS

We reject the concept of "educational conscription" that forces people to remain in education until 18.

BENEFITS

Students may leave school at 16 to pursue alternative training, including apprenticeships. The introduction of T Levels is a sensible strategy to introduce a post 16 qualification that relates to a specific industry (and therefore has a higher chance of gaining a viable career at the end). Anyone 'not in education, employment or training' will be free to work or train or, if they prefer and can afford to, support themselves.

4. DISTILLATION OF THE UNIVERSITIES

Entities that cannot provide the full University range – Bachelor, Masters, Doctorate and research faculties – shall no longer be called Universities, they are 'Colleges'.

NOTES

We shall abolish all quotas in education and provide technical colleges as well as universities, promote apprenticeships and the employment of the useful over the conceptual in education. Arguably education is provided for people to obtain gainful employment/ career progression at least as much as it is for enjoyment!

We advocate the dismantling of any subsidies distorting the market and size of the University population.

We shall abolish the student loans system (which is currently risky to taxpayers and merely enables the

BENEFITS

At root this measure is about restoring focus on excellence in education. Reversing the debasement of the term university will also make the term college more informative. This is not the same thing as denigrating it.

rise of a whole host of hedonist degrees – the utility of which has no place being funded by the state). In place of the student loans system we would facilitate the ISA (Income Share Agreement) which would be the backbone of funding to university and higher education. This will reduce the risks to all parties involved, especially students. Those avenues of study not funded by these methods could be self-funded by the student making their own financial arrangements. This would in turn reduce the number of spurious courses currently extorting vast sums for little, practical gain.

5. EX-MILITARY EDUCATION

A Libertarian government will grant an education voucher for any three year course at tertiary or higher education level to those who have been in Military service of five years or more. Serving our country comes with benefits – this is one.

“Intellectual growth should commence at birth and cease only at death.” - Einstein

Digital Edition: Promoted by Aidan Powlesland on behalf of the Libertarian Party, both at Gemini House, 136-140 Old Shoreham Road, Brighton BN3 7BD. Published online at libertarianparty.co.uk and libertarianpartyuk.com.

