

- Ensure that the system includes *children's centres* for the very youngest children and their parents, and childcare and early education for children from age 1.
- Ensure that those who lead early years education are *qualified teachers* with qualified teacher status and with *specialist knowledge of early years education*; and ensure all other staff are qualified to level 3.
- Encourage *parents* to participate in helping to run the service.
- Ensure that parents would receive much increased Child Benefit from 2016 and would continue to receive *Statutory Maternity and Paternity Pay*.

We estimate that in the longer run this will cost around £8 billion a year over and above the cost of the existing free and subsidised schemes and tax concessions, which would be abolished.

SCHOOLS

Teachers feel undervalued and their professionalism is undermined by a strict curriculum. Two-fifths of teachers quit within five years of beginning their careers, ground down by an excessive workload, much of it unrelated to teaching.

The Green Party believes that children are over-assessed and teachers are over-regulated. Teaching to the test is not satisfying teaching and it's boring for students, yet that's what successive governments have obliged teachers to do. We need to free teachers and pupils to rediscover the excitement of learning, released from the shackles of a system designed with only economic competitiveness and preparation for work in mind, and with excessive teacher workloads burdened by bureaucracy.

We are determined to make schools fit for children rather than the other way round. In line with Green Party principles, decisions around education will be taken at the most local level possible, but in general we support:

- Democratic accountability and a key role for *local authorities* in planning, admissions policy and equality of access for children with special needs.
- A *comprehensive system* of local schools offering mixed-ability teaching and staffed by qualified teachers, and the integration of *grammar schools* into the comprehensive system.
- *Restoring education current and capital funding* to 2010 levels in real terms (costing around £7 billion a year) and distributing it fairly among local authorities, reflecting the core costs of education, pupil needs, the quality of existing school buildings and equity between school types. With the new early education service above, and counting the expansion of apprenticeships below this, would create around a quarter of a million jobs.
- Action to reduce teacher *workload* and introduce professional *pay* levels for all teachers.
- Ending the *marketisation* and outsourcing of education.
- Leaving local education authorities free to decide how much to allocate to *current* spending and how much to *capital* projects.
- *Class sizes of 20*, costing £1.5 billion over the Parliament.
- The integration of *academies and free schools* into the local authority system.
- Academic learning from 6 years old, with earlier years education focusing on play, social cohesion and confidence-building, and *compulsory education* beginning at age 7.
- The abolition of *SATS and league tables* and the evaluation of schools by parents, teachers and the local community, not *Ofsted* (the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills), which we would abolish, reducing the accountability-related workload.
- A broad, balanced and enriching *curriculum*, including creative and vocational areas, and making PSHE (including sex and relationships education, and also first aid) compulsory, with a coherent 16–19 qualifications framework allowing a real choice of academic and vocational areas, or a mixture of them.
- An increase in *outdoor education and physical activity* so children establish an early and strong relationship with their local environment.
- The right for every child who is *disabled to a mainstream education*.
- The removal of charitable status from *private schools*, with a view to absorbing them into the state system, but nevertheless ensuring that no schools are run for profit.
- We will phase out public funding of *schools run by religious organisations*. Schools may teach about religions, but should not encourage adherence to any particular religious beliefs.
- *Home* education and flexi-schooling.