

PROTECT EDUCATION FUNDING

Unless the new Conservative government at Westminster takes the right decisions on education funding, pupils and students across the UK are likely to be hit hard by significant cuts in education provision.

Schools and colleges are facing considerable additional costs this year, many due to decisions by the outgoing Coalition government, for which extra funding has not been provided. Higher National Insurance and pension contributions alone are likely to take away 5% of their budgets. Student numbers are rising sharply, yet staff face redundancy due to financial pressures. Without urgent action to protect and increase funding, students will see bigger class sizes, fewer teachers and lecturers and a reduced curriculum.

No part of the UK is exempt from this threat. Decisions taken at Westminster will have an impact on block grant settlements to the devolved administrations in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales and will consequently affect the funding available to education in those countries as well as in England.

Despite its promise to “ring fence” education funding, the Coalition government cut its total spending on education in real terms. Funding for some areas such as adult education, post 16 education and capital building projects have been hit particularly hard over the past five years.

In the run up to this election, all the political parties made commitments to ‘protect’ education funding over the next five years. The first test of the Conservative Party’s intentions towards education will be whether it will act to fund additional costs and protect all education funding regardless of sector, age or location.

Spending on education is an essential investment in the future. Our first focus must be on the value of education, rather than its cost. Cutting spending on education will damage the prospects for economic growth as well as undermining educational standards.

Ensuring that schools and colleges have the resources to educate our people should be a priority for every political party, just as it is for our organisations. We urge the new government to ensure that education funding is prioritised and fully protected.

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