



# WELSH CONSERVATIVE PLAN TO **FIX** THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

SENEDD ELECTION 2026

## FOREWORD

### **Giving young people the best possible start in life is a critical element of our mission to fix Wales and get Wales working.**

Wales' economic output, measured by Gross Value Added, a key measure of economic productivity is just 74% of the UK average, the lowest of all UK nations and regions. After 27 years of successive Labour governments, propped up by Plaid Cymru, Wales has one of the highest rates of economic inactivity and youth unemployment.

Breaking the cycle of worklessness and economic inactivity starts at a young age, giving our young people the skills they need to get on a path to a successful career. This means our school system needs to better reflect the diverse range of skills needed to power our future workforce, including manual trades and vocational training.

Ensuring that every young person can leave education with the qualifications they need to get a job gives them the economic security of a monthly pay cheque, but also empowers them to do other things like get on the property ladder or buy a car.

To fix our education system, we need to restore discipline in the classroom, drive up standards and improve both parental and pupil choice. Labour believe the power to choose is elitist, but it's a way to empower pupils and parents, give them more of a say over their education and drive-up standards. Our economy cannot afford for another generation of young people to be held back by Labour and an education system that doesn't fulfil their potential.

Welsh Conservatives have a plan to fix our education system and get Wales working. It's a plan that you can help deliver by voting Welsh Conservative on Thursday 7th May.

By working together, we can fix Wales.



Darren Millar  
Leader of the Welsh Conservatives



**After nearly three decades of a Labour government in Wales, our education system is underperforming compared to the rest of the UK and sadly trails many comparable European countries.**

I've looked at the international assessments, and they have helped draw my attention to the urgent need for improvement. I'm concerned that results from the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) have repeatedly shown Welsh pupils performing, on average, below those in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland in the core skills of reading, maths and science. That's not fair on young people.

From the many conversations I've had with teachers, headteachers and education experts, there are persistent challenges around literacy and numeracy, classroom behaviour, teacher recruitment, the new Curriculum for Wales, school attendance and support for pupils with additional learning needs, all of which contribute to a system and teachers under chronic pressure.

We have an ambitious plan to fix our education system, firstly by improving behaviour to ensure that the classroom is a fit learning environment. This means banning mobile phones in the classroom, stopping under-16s from accessing social media and empowering teachers to impose discipline. We will drive up standards of attainment in both academic qualifications, but also improve access to vocational pathways, including apprenticeships and degree apprenticeships.

We will support our further and higher education sectors and put pressure on the UK Government to make favourable changes to student finance to reduce student debt interest payments. Welsh Conservatives will deliver an education system that prepares young people for the world of work and equips them with the broad range of life skills they need to play a full part in our economy and wider society.

Our plan to fix education is ambitious and will ensure that every child and young person is able to identify and nurture their own talents and get on a path to a rewarding career.



Natasha Asghar  
Candidate for Casnewydd Islwyn





EDUCATION MANIFESTO POLICIES

# A WELSH CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT WILL:

## INVEST IN OUR SCHOOLS

- Increase school funding in each and every year of the next Welsh Parliament
- Introduce a National School Funding Formula to level up per pupil funding across Wales
- Fund schools directly to ensure that more money gets into the classroom
- Provide three-year indicative budgets to education providers to assist with financial management

## PROVIDE A HIGH QUALITY LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

- Deliver an ambitious new school building programme
- Encourage the creation of new specialist schools in the arts, sciences and sports
- Protect school playing fields and sports facilities from closure and sale
- Widen access to school facilities, to enable community access outside school hours and term times

## IMPROVE STANDARDS

- Permit the establishment of Academy Schools and Free Schools in Wales to improve learner outcomes
- Drive up Wales' ranking in international education league tables
- Establish an All-Wales Education Advisory Service to promote good practice
- Extend unannounced school inspections
- Improve literacy using evidence-based approaches including introducing Systematic Synthetic Phonics to Welsh schools
- Review the Welsh Curriculum
- Initiate Standardised Assessment Tests in primary schools to measure pupil progress and school performance
- Scrap the Welsh Baccalaureate to allow pupils to focus on internationally recognised qualifications
- Establish a Welsh Excellence Fund to help more able and talented pupils realise their full potential

## BACK PROFESSIONALS AND RESTORE DISCIPLINE

- Restore discipline and respect, and improve school attendance, through School Covenants between parents, teachers and pupils
- Introduce automatic expulsions for pupils in possession of knives and other weapons
- Help teachers tackle bullying by banning mobile phones in schools and supporting a ban on social media for under-16s
- Empower the Education Workforce Council to establish new routes into the teaching profession
- Remove unnecessary barriers to entry to the teaching profession for suitably qualified overseas trained teachers, further education lecturers, veterans, and teaching staff in independent school
- Work with teachers to establish a teacher and supply teacher workforce plan



## PROMOTE LEARNER WELLBEING, SAFETY AND LIFE-SKILLS

- Protect female-only spaces and sports for women and girls in Welsh schools, colleges and universities
- Promote aspiration, enterprise and entrepreneurship by establishing a social enterprise in every secondary school
- Make Wales a Nation of Lifesavers by introducing first aid training in all schools
- Provide access to named Guidance Counsellors in every school

- Ensure that all schools, colleges and universities have mental health and wellbeing services for learners to access
- Introduce a Service Pupil Premium to support the children of military personnel
- Ensure that pupils develop essential life-skills such as budgeting, how to manage a home and prepare a healthy meal via the introduction of mandatory Home Economics lessons
- Review legislation and support arrangements for pupils with Additional Learning Needs
- Reduce waiting times for Individual Development Plans and assessments for Additional Learning Needs
- Free up teaching time by placing more Additional Learning Needs specialists into schools
- Work with local authorities to provide sustainable funding for Additional Learning Needs
- Guarantee access to outdoor education experiences

## SUPPORT FAMILIES

- Extend free childcare to children aged 9 months to 4 years old to help families to budget and enable a return to work
- Give working parents a choice to nominate a grandparent to receive a Grandparent Childcare Payment of up to £4,800 pe
- Provide universal access to free parenting lessons to equip mums and dads with the skills and knowledge they need to raise their children with confidence and support healthy relationships at home



- Protect children by commissioning a Wales-wide inquiry into grooming gangs
- Work with childcare providers to make the Welsh childcare system more sustainable

## ENHANCE PARENTAL RIGHTS AND CHOICE

- Re-establish the right for parents to withdraw their children from sex education and religious education lessons
- Establish a Welsh Schools Performance Portal to promote choice and help parents and learners compare data on school exam results, attendance, expulsions, financial performance, and easily access inspection reports

- Enable good schools which are oversubscribed to increase their pupil places
- Create more Welsh-medium school places
- Require all local authorities to ensure that parents have a choice for their children of both English and Welsh medium schools
- Protect free home to school transport, including for pupils attending their nearest faith or Welsh-medium school



## **WIDEN** ACCESS TO UNIVERSITY AND ENHANCE STUDENT EXPERIENCES

- Urgently work with Further and Higher Education Institutions to provide sustainable public funding, with a focus on part-time courses and flexible higher education
- Pilot a £1,000 tuition fee discount for those studying STEM subjects
- Work with Welsh Universities to introduce intensive degrees that can be completed over two years
- Require universities to publish more data on earnings and employment outcomes for their students
- Encourage the take up of part-time, distance learning and flexible higher and further education courses
- Refund University tuition fees for nursing, medicine, teaching and dentistry students who study in Wales and go on to work for at least 5 years in the Welsh NHS or Welsh schools
- Help young people access education and training with free bus travel for 16-24 year olds
- Introduce a Student Accommodation Quality Standard for halls of residence
- Stamp out antisemitism and other forms of racism and hatred on university and higher education campuses
- Partner with Welsh universities and the private sector to create a new centre of excellence and research into energy storage and transportation
- Work with the UK Government to cut excessive interest rates on student debt and reduce public funding for degree courses with poorer job prospects

## **PROMOTE** VOCATIONAL SKILLS AND LIFELONG LEARNING

- Ensure parity between technical and academic education
- Provide a Welsh STEM strategy, with reforms including cutting tuition fees for Welsh students at Welsh universities, protecting the GCSE science triple award and introducing Welsh T-Levels
- Create a joined-up strategy for vocational education and training, right the way from schools into workplace training
- Set an ambitious target to deliver 125,000 apprenticeships over the next Senedd term to meet the skills Wales needs to drive economic growth
- Deliver apprenticeship opportunities from all Welsh Government funded major infrastructure projects
- Expand degree apprenticeships and access to higher education courses in Welsh colleges
- Foster partnership working between Further and Higher Education for research and innovation
- Make Wales a Lifelong Learning Nation through entitlements to support for people to learn, upskill or retrain throughout their working lives
- Promote engagement with the Turing Scheme for young people wanting to experience study, volunteer and work overseas
- Establish a STEM focused Defence Academy for Wales