



# THE GLOUCESTERSHIRE TEACHER

NEWSLETTER OF THE GLOUCESTERSHIRE ASSOCIATION OF THE NATIONAL UNION OF TEACHERS ~ JANUARY 2006

**HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL MEMBERS!**

**Let's hope 2006 brings more joy for teachers than 2005. After the TLR debacle you'd think that wouldn't be difficult, but Tony has saved the best for last. Now read on...**

## EDUCATION WHITE PAPER FOR 2006

### “Higher Standards, Better Schools For All”

**AN ALARMING SET OF PROPOSALS** is contained in the government's White Paper on education. We are faced with radical and far-reaching changes to the structure of the English education system.

At the same time the White Paper contains other proposals which, as a Union, we would welcome. That's why the Union nationally is describing this White Paper as two White Papers!

Here are the proposals, copied directly from the White Paper's 'Executive summary' section:

#### **A radical new school system**

- Every school will be able to acquire a self-governing Trust similar to those supporting Academies. Academies will remain at the heart of the programme.
- All new schools will be self-governing Foundation, voluntary aided, Trust schools or Academies.
- Independent schools will find it easier to enter the new system.
- A national Schools Commissioner will drive change, matching schools and new partners, promoting the benefits of choice, access and diversity, and taking action where parental choices are being frustrated.

#### **Improved choice and access for all**

- There will be better information for all parents when their child enters primary and secondary school, and dedicated choice advisers to help the least well-off parents to exercise their choices.
- Free school transport to their three nearest secondary schools within a six mile radius (when they are outside walking distance) will be offered to children from poorer families.
- It will be made easier for schools to introduce banding into their admissions policies, so that they can keep a proportion of places for students who live outside traditional school catchment areas within a genuinely comprehensive intake.

#### **Parents and pupils fully engaged in improving standards**

- Parents will receive regular, meaningful reports during the school year about how their child is doing, with opportunities to discuss their child's progress with their teachers.
- Parents will have the chance to form Parent Councils to influ-

ence school decisions on issues such as school meals, uniform and discipline (such Councils will be required in Trust schools).

- Parents will have better local complaints procedures and access to a new national complaints service from Ofsted where local procedures have been exhausted
- Parents will have access to more and clearer information about local schools, how to get involved and how to lever change.
- Parents will be able to set up new schools supported by a dedicated capital pot.

#### **Education tailored to the individual.**

- Targeted one-to-one tuition will be provided in English and maths in the schools with the most underperforming pupils, to help those falling behind to catch up with their peers.
- There will be more stretching lessons and opportunities for gifted and talented pupils.
- There will be extended schools, offering many new opportunities to learn and develop beyond the formal school day.
- There will be more grouping and setting by subject ability.
- There will be a national training programme to enable each school to have one leading professional to help develop tailored lessons.

#### **Strong measures to tackle failure and underperformance**

- Schools in Special Measures will be more quickly turned around. Where no progress is made after a year, a competition for new providers will be held. Schools that receive a notice to improve from Ofsted will enter Special Measures within a year, if progress is not made.

- Competitions will be required for new schools and the replacement of failing schools, providing a straightforward route to bring new providers into the system. All new schools will be self-governing Foundation, voluntary aided, Trust schools or Academies.
- Parents will be able to urge Ofsted action or request new providers, and where there is strong demand or dissatisfaction with existing choices, local authorities will have to respond to their concerns.

#### **A lighter touch for good schools**

- Good schools will be able to expand, or federate more easily with other schools, to increase the supply of good places, improving choices for parents.
- The best specialist schools will be able to acquire extra specialisms and will be funded for new responsibilities such as teacher training.
- Ofsted to consult on an even lighter touch inspection system for high-performing schools.

#### **Better discipline to enable teachers to teach and pupils to learn**

- A clear and unambiguous legal right for teachers to discipline pupils will be introduced. This will be backed by an expectation that every school has a clear set of rules and sanctions.
- Parenting contracts and orders will be extended, so that schools can use them to force parents to take responsibility for their children's bad behaviour in school.
- Parents will be required to take responsibility for excluded pupils in their first five days of a suspension (by ensuring they are prop-

erly supervised doing schoolwork at home) with fines for parents if excluded pupils are found unsupervised during school hours.

- Headteachers will be expected to use their newly-devolved powers and funding collectively to develop on or off-site provision for suspensions longer than five days (instead of fifteen days at present).

#### **A new role for local authorities**

- As part of their wider responsibilities for children and young people, local authorities will be expected to become the champions of pupils and parents, commissioning rather than providing education. They will have a new duty to promote choice, diversity and fair access to school places and school transport and new powers to act decisively where schools are failing and underperforming.
- It will be easier for new schools to be established, where there is parental demand. The School Organisation Committee will be abolished and decisions made by local authorities. Disputes will continue to be resolved by the Schools Adjudicator.
- Local authorities will work with the newly-created Schools Commissioner to ensure more choice, greater diversity and better access for disadvantaged groups to good schools in every area.
- Local authorities and local Learning and Skills Councils will work more closely together to ensure real choice and higher standards in the provision of education for 14-19 year-olds in schools and colleges.

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# INITIAL NUT RESPONSES TO THE WHITE PAPER

Fundamental to the White Paper, is the Government's belief that giving choice to parents and increasing diversity of provision will, of themselves, raise standards. This view is contradicted by international evidence. The Union believes the proposals in the White Paper would in reality undermine standards across the secondary sector and create a 'two tier' system.

**Where the government wishes to encourage competition between schools, and introduce private money through Trust and Academy status, the NUT believes what is needed is a GOOD LOCAL SCHOOL for every child, with choice and diversity inside every school.**

#### **1. The implications of the government's 'choice' proposals**

The White Paper's focus is on those parents who are unable to access choice. The Government, aware that "the affluent can buy choice", seeks to redress the balance by empowering the least well off parents with dedicated 'Choice Advisers' and free school transport for children from poorer families. Choice is predicated, therefore, on many young people travelling some distance to their schools.

The White Paper proposes that legislation be introduced so that

- those eligible for free school meals or
- those in receipt of the maximum level of Working Tax Credit be entitled to free transport to any of the three suitable secondary schools closest to their home within a 2-6 miles radius. Such an arrangement will be of little benefit to the least well off families who have no transport of their own. It is a proposal based on an urban, even 'London-centric', model of school provision and does not meet the needs of children in rural areas where secondary school

provision may be dispersed over a large geographical area and public transport may be infrequent or non-existent.

Self-governing schools (those that have Foundation, Voluntary-Aided or Trust status) will be allowed to construct their own admissions policies. The government proposes banding as the way of ensuring schools have balanced intakes yet there is no reference in the White Paper to a common admissions policy between schools or even a common authority-wide approach to banding.

How can parents exercise choice when schools themselves are able to operate their own admissions arrangements? Children will be turned away from oversubscribed 'successful' schools. This is a recipe for frustration for many parents and, through differences in the price of housing, a two-tier school system favouring the affluent. To those who have, shall be given; to those who have not, shall be taken away.

## 2. The implications of the government's 'diversity' proposals

The white paper seeks to increase the numbers and types of 'self-governing schools', adding a new category of self-governing Trust school. The plans to increase self-governing status are accompanied by proposals to reduce the role of local authorities from 'provider' to 'commissioner'.

The White Paper implies that only Trust schools will be able to promote innovation and diversity across the system including being able to apply for additional curriculum flexibilities and freedoms of pay and conditions. It is clearly the Government's intention that community schools and voluntary controlled schools become Trust or Foundation Schools. The pressure will be on those schools to make this change so they can access greater curricular freedoms and improved funding. Local authorities will be barred from proposing new community schools.

The introduction of Trusts, and the expansion of Foundation status, will be a method of introducing new providers, or sponsors, including private, charitable and faith schools sponsors. This will create the conditions for increased inequality of access to schools leading, in some cases, to selection by faith thereby fostering segregation in the wider community.

The similarity of Trust and Academy governance implies that the Government intends that Trust status will provide a future stepping stone to acquiring Academy status.

The White Paper emphasises that Academy status remains "at the heart of the programme". In this context, the White Paper recalibrates the Government's objective for the number of Academies, from a target of 200 to the intention of achieving **at least** 200.

In addition, the Government envisages that, over time, all schools will take the role of employer; a role which few primary schools and only a minority of secondary schools have pressed for.

## 3. Implications for local authorities

Within the White Paper, the Government seeks to paint a picture of schools being freed from the dead hand of local authorities in order to justify the dismantlement of the current local education structure and replace it with state-funded independent schools all competing with each other.

There will be a fundamental shift of responsibility and culture as local authorities will no longer be the providers of education; they will instead commission educational services from schools on behalf of parents and children.

The White Paper makes it clear that local authorities will, once again, be responsible for the organisation of schools. Local authorities will be able to require the establishment of federations. New collaborative relationships between local authorities and Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs) are envisaged. Schools Organisation Committees will be abolished for the telling reason that they have 'supported the status quo'.

The Government envisages that local authorities will be responsible for promoting choice, diversity and fair access to schools. The Schools Commissioner's role will be one of chivvying local authorities into promoting Trust schools and Academies and advising Government on intervention when authorities fail to meet these objectives. The local authorities' power to intervene when schools are considered to be failing or in need of improvement will be extended, but local authorities will be required to consult schools on their children and young people's plans and, in turn, all schools will be required to have regard to such plans.

There may be teachers who believe that a reduction in local authority powers will lead to greater professional freedom. In fact, Government proposals ranging from the organisation of teaching groups and sets, to the role of parents, show that central government is determined to increase its control over what goes on in schools.

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# Salary safeguarding for MAs to TLRs

Teachers who lose pay as a result of school staffing reviews, and the introduction of TLR payments, will receive cash safeguarding for a maximum of 3 years. **All safeguarding for former MA payments will end on 31 December 2008 at the latest.**

Safeguarding for former MA payments may, however, be lost earlier than this as a result of pay progression or in other circumstances. Safeguarding for **all MAs awarded on or after 1 April 2004** will only apply until the end of the period of up to 12 months for which they were awarded. For more detail see below.

Safeguarding for leadership group teachers and ASTs, who lose pay as a result of school staffing reviews, will end three years after the date on which the pay changes affecting them are implemented.

When safeguarding ends, teachers will experience actual cuts in pay and in some cases prospective cuts in pensions entitlements. All teachers in receipt of safeguarding worth more than £500 can be required to carry out additional work in return for that safeguarding and may lose safeguarding if they unreasonably refuse to carry out such additional work.

## Principles of Safeguarding for MAs

The system will be based on "cash safeguarding" protecting a fixed "safeguarded sum", which will be the teacher's former MA less any TLR awarded.

The safeguarded sum will not change during the period for which it is paid. It will not be increased or reduced in line with future pay awards. When it is withdrawn, it will be withdrawn in full. For teachers who are not awarded TLR payments, the safeguarded sum will be the value of their current MA payments. For teachers awarded TLR payments lower in value than their MA payments, the safeguarded sum will be the difference between the two.

The value of the safeguarded sum must be individually notified to the teacher before the end of January 2006.

## Safeguarding for MA Payments awarded on or after 1st April 2004 and all other temporary MAs

All MAs awarded on or after 1 April 2004 are temporary because they are statutorily limited to a maximum period of twelve months, renewable for a further twelve months, even though the responsi-

bilities themselves may be permanent.

Teachers who hold “temporary” MAs of this kind and who are awarded TLRs lower in value or are not awarded TLRs will be safeguarded only until the end of the period for which the temporary MA was awarded.

To protect such teachers against suffering pay cuts (simply because of the “temporary” nature of their MA), the school could award a recruitment and retention payment up to the same value as that MA when it expires, for a period ending on 31 December 2008.

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# NEWS SNIPPETS

● **Early Retirement (Redundancy)** – Retention of the current scheme is unlikely. The expectation is it will be a redundancy payment (based upon actual salary) plus pension scheme lump sum and protection against any actuarial reduction, **but no added years.**

● Head teachers are reportedly under extreme pressure. They are reporting a 26% increase in workload. NAHT report a **36% increase (nationally) in heads being absent on long-term sick leave due to stress.** Restructuring has coincided with school self-evaluation. The tyranny of Ofsted has pushed aside the restructuring consultations.

● **Governors vote with their feet** as too much work and time is being demanded of them.

● **PPA time** – almost all schools are now offering the 10% guaranteed minimum. Reminder: it is a binding contractual requirement, not an option.

● **The 10% guaranteed minimum PPA time** must be timetabled in much the same way as lessons. Has your school done this?

● **The 10% guaranteed minimum PPA time** must not be encroached upon for any reason outside of emergencies. Is your school using you for cover in that time or are you being directed to attend meetings? Your PPA time must be used for planning, preparation and assessment.

● **Primary teachers, who is teaching your class during your PPA time?** This year most primary schools have employed qualified teachers to cover the guaranteed PPA time. This may not be sustainable in the long-term. There are fears about insufficient funding being available for the year 2006/7 and the potential impact this would have upon class sizes. There are serious concerns about the availability of HLTAs as insufficient numbers have been trained. Alternatives such as P.E. Instructors and volunteers are not sustainable. Reminder: **what your class is doing while you take your PPA time, is not your responsibility. You are not required to plan, prepare or assess the work they do in that time.**

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## GLOUCESTERSHIRE ASSOCIATION NUT CONTACTS

If your District isn't listed then contact the Association Secretary.

Members can make contact with all the Officers listed below through the Association's website

**Gloucestershire Association's Divisional Secretary:**

Andy Johnson: 01285 655 022  
secretary@gloucestershire.nut.org.uk

**Berkeley Vale District Secretary:**

Nigel Meredith: 01453 546 795

**Cirencester District Secretary:**

Dave Sutherland: 01285 654 416

**Cheltenham District Secretary:**

Ian Morgan: 01242 578 793

**Forest of Dean District Secretary:**

Geoff Davies: 01594 544 036

**Gloucester District Secretary:**

Garry Wheeler: 01452 531 342

**Newent and Tewkesbury District Secretary:**

John Pemberthy: 01594 564 508

**Stroud District Secretary:**

Mike Davis: 01453 883 995

**Health and Safety Adviser:**

Colin O'Hare: 01285 653 695

**Union Learning Representatives:**

Garry Wheeler: 01452 531 342  
garrywheeler@blueyonder.co.uk

John Pemberthy: 01594 564 508

Pemberthy@btinternet.com

**Supply Teachers' Secretary:**

Claire Price: 01242 244 582

**Retired Teachers' Secretary:**

Pearl Harris-Clarke: 01452 616 620

**National Executive member:**

Max Hyde 01217 453 942  
max@piscator.demon.co.uk

**Regional Office in Exeter:** 01392 258 028

south.west@nut.org.uk

**Update your membership:** 0845 300 1666

**Want to join?** 0845 300 1669

**National Union's website:** [www.teachers.org.uk](http://www.teachers.org.uk)

**Local Association website:** [www.glosnut.co.uk](http://www.glosnut.co.uk)