



Southwark Liberal Democrats

HOMES ■ KIDS ■ JOBS
And a Council Tax Cut

Education and childcare

February 2014

Southwark Liberal Democrats will:

1. **Offer a day a month of free childcare for all two, three and four year olds** to give parents a helping hand and support them back into work.
2. **Build new primary and secondary schools where they are needed** to bring an end to Labour's school places crisis.
3. **Maintain free universal school meals for all primary school children** backed by new funding from the Government.
4. **Establish a new University Technical College in the north of the borough.**
5. **Provide free extra tuition for children requiring additional support**, working with schools and using the 'Pupil Premium' funding given by the Coalition government.

Free childcare

Liberal Democrats in government are making a huge contribution to childcare nationally, helping struggling families with pre-school costs and allowing parents to return to work. Investment in children at a young age and helping parents into work has huge benefits for families and the local economy.

The Coalition has delivered 15 hours of free childcare for all three and four year olds. The same offer is also being rolled out to two year olds, beginning with the most disadvantaged.

Southwark Liberal Democrats will give a day a month of free childcare for all two, three and four year olds. This will be a major commitment to put the council on the side of local families, costing £1.75 million in the first year (beginning from September 2014). This is fully funded in our budget plans for 2014/15. It is paid for by cutting costs in other areas – including slashing Labour's £9.3 million bill for waste and utilising the additional £1.5 million of government funding for free school meals, previously paid for by the council.

We want parents to be able to access accurate and clear information about childcare providers, costs, opening hours and entitlements, which is why we will set up an advice line for parents to find out about nurseries and childcare in their area, and also upgrade the information available online to help people make the best choices for their children.

Building new schools

Southwark Labour has done little to secure new primary and secondary schools despite a desperate need for places. By 2016, the council predicts a shortfall of up to 690 primary school places across the borough, but have no coherent plan to tackle it and no political will to do so.

They have refused to talk to potential providers of new schools because of ideological opposition to the new 'free' school model, and have failed to identify enough sites for new schools. As a result, 10% of Southwark children starting primary school last year went into temporary classrooms rather than having permanent places.

Southwark Liberal Democrats will ensure that every child needing a primary school place in the borough gets one. We will rise to the challenge of getting new primary and secondary schools built where they are needed, and will work with potential education providers to make it happen. Unlike Labour we will put in place a robust long-term strategy to deal with the shortage of school places, and will not put politics ahead of the education of children. We believe that the money and sites are available but the political will is missing. We will end Labour's years of dither and delay on school places, putting children and parents first.

Maintaining free school meals

Liberal Democrats in Southwark will continue to fund free school meals for all primary school children throughout the next administration.

A large amount of council money has already been spent on setting up the scheme and improving school kitchens, as well as on the costs of the meals themselves. This has been a major cost implication for the council. However, the cost burden has now been significantly lessened with the announcement by Nick Clegg that the Coalition will fund free school meals for all pupils in the first three years of school.

We will protect funding for free school meals for all primary school years, guaranteeing that this benefit will be retained for all primary school children in Southwark.

We will also go further. A Liberal Democrat administration will commission an independent review into the progress the policy has made in tackling obesity and achievement levels. We will also look at what other similar support can be given to students to help with achievement and healthy eating, such as breakfast clubs.

Establishing a new University Technical College

Southwark Liberal Democrats want to provide broad education choices and quality technical education for young people. People need the right skills to access the jobs local employers offer.

Liberal Democrat councillors and Simon Hughes MP have been campaigning to secure funding for a new secondary school and a University Technical College (UTC) in Bermondsey. This would constitute a learning facility for 14-19 year olds to train them in skilled physical jobs that local employers need, such as engineering skills or construction.

Free extra teaching support for children who need it

Southwark Liberal Democrats want to give every child the right start in life and to provide them with education opportunities to maximise their talent and ability.

Private tuition is one factor currently giving children from higher income families an advantage in life. We want to level the playing field and make sure other young people in Southwark are also given the same opportunity.

The government has allocated millions of pounds in 'Pupil Premium' funding to help families from low incomes. We will work with schools to help them provide free extra teaching support for those children that need it, funded by Pupil Premium money.