

## Spring Conference 2021

### The next steps for *Our National Mission*

**Proposed by:** Policy Development Committee

#### Conference notes:

1. Since 2016, the Welsh Liberal Democrats have been in government delivering the biggest set of educational reforms in a generation.
2. As the Education Minister, Kirsty Williams MS has delivered on smaller infant class sizes, a new leadership and training academy, safeguards for rural schools, the most progressive system of student finance in Europe, a whole-school approach to mental health, relationship and sexuality education, investment in the Pupil Development Grant and much more.
3. A 2020 OECD report which found that under our leadership, Wales now has a clear vision for its education system and for its learners.
4. The contribution, dedication, and resilience of Wales' community of educators, who have gone above and beyond to care, educate, and support children and their families throughout the pandemic.

#### Conference believes:

- A. That an inclusive, equitable, high-quality, and life-long education is an essential tool in empowering people and providing them with opportunities to pursue ambitions and to thrive.
- B. That schools are an integral part of our communities and are valuable resources for communities across Wales. Our colleges and universities have much to offer to people, our communities, and our economy.
- C. That education, training, and life-long learning must form an essential part of our response to the Coronavirus pandemic and the opportunities of technological developments.

#### Our Coronavirus recovery must:

- 1. Address the attainment gap in our schools by:**
  - a. Investing in measures to tackle holiday hunger and improve engagement opportunities for vulnerable learners, including the provision of free school meals throughout all school holidays.
  - b. Ending digital exclusion by ensuring that all learners have access to their own laptop/device and schools have access to adequate broadband and technology.

- c. Creating summer schools, out-of-term schools, and other resources as well as solutions to allow students to catch up with lost learning.
- d. Taking forward the recommendations featured in Professor Charlotte Williams' review to improve the teaching of themes relating to Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities as well as enhancing experiences of minority groups across all parts of the school curriculum.

**2. Continue reforms to deliver excellence in our education system by:**

- a. Providing the necessary resources and support for schools and teachers to allow successful implementation of the new curriculum and qualifications framework.
- b. Reviewing local government funding to ensure a fairer, more accurate assessment of needs and costs, and setting up a review to assess whether there is a fairer way to fund our schools.
- c. Considering whether school term dates could be reformed whilst maintaining the current number of school 'holiday' days for staff and learners.
- d. Continuing the work to improve collaboration in the post-compulsory education sector through a new Post Compulsory Education and Training body.

**3. Deliver a whole school approach to mental health by:**

- a. Introducing an all-Wales framework to ensure consistency across schools and councils, investing in access to school counsellors so that more pupils are given the support they need.
- b. Rolling out trauma-informed practice in all secondary and primary schools, so that teachers and all other staff are able to act as "first responders".

**4. Support students to achieve their potential by:**

- a. Continuing to provide a sustainable system of student funding that has student living costs at their heart, and work with the UK Government to provide students with access to social security.
- b. Introducing and resourcing a Student Mental Health Strategy.
- c. Introducing and resourcing a 'digital entitlement' for post-16 learners, so that all learners can engage more fully with their learning and training.

- d. Ensuring that students are represented in every post-16 education provider through autonomous, structurally independent, and funded Students' Unions.

**5. Creating a truly equitable and life-long education system that provides everyone with a second chance by:**

- a. Expanding the current Personal Learning Accounts, so that everyone has the chance to continue learning and training, particularly in sectors likely to contribute to a greener, stronger economy.
- b. Investing in apprenticeships as a genuine option for those leaving school and for those seeking to re-skill, including in new sectors.

**6. Create a fairer, more equitable education system by:**

- a. Revising the mandate of Qualification Wales so that tests or exams for adults with long-term negative experiences of education can be replaced with alternative forms of assessment.
- b. Creating a more psychologically informed education system that supports all learners to engage in their learning, and eliminates exclusionary practices.
- c. Continuing to deliver reforms to Relationship and Sexuality Education across all schools, and creating a more positive environment for trans students.

**7. Realise Welsh language citizenship for all by:**

- a. Introducing a new 'Welsh Language Education for All' Act, normalising the Welsh language in education, as well as supporting and enabling the growth of Welsh-language provision, including for life-long learners and people in post-16 education.
- b. Investing in the development and recruitment of a welsh-speaking workforce across early years, statutory schooling and childcare.

**8. Put education at the heart of our communities by**

- a. Continuing to invest in creating community focused schools, including ensuring that all schools have Community Engagement Officers.
- b. Working with Colleges to provide employer hubs and digital community hubs, and promoting the role of Universities in training, innovation, and their civic mission.

## **9. Support staff across the education sector by:**

- a. Providing mental health support for the whole workforce, alongside a reduction in workload and pressure on the system.
- b. Working towards the introduction of the Real Living Wage for the Further Education sector.
- c. Continuing support for the education workforce to access training and development, including through the National Academy for Educational Leadership.

## **10. Create an international, global education system by:**

- a. Reaffirming our commitment to the principles of the Erasmus programme and working with the UK Government and others to establish a genuine replacement.
- b. Continuing to support and enable the take up of modern foreign languages to encourage young people to be global citizens.

## **Amendments:**

### **Amendment 1 - Welsh Young Liberals**

Insert new 4d and renumber accordingly

“Reforming apprenticeships, ensuring that all learners have access to high quality training, and that time for formal training is protected”