

Our Pledge to Parents

Taking politics out of the classroom:
Schools that unite, not divide



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Our Pledge to Parents

Under the Conservatives, schools will be places of learning, where we keep politics out of the classroom, but never our values.

Parents will be able to have confidence that their children will be taught in a politically impartial environment. Political impartiality will be understood and valued by all who work in schools, with clear enforcement as a backup.

That starts with making sure that teachers are properly supported and trained. We will strengthen teacher training and put explicit political impartiality obligations into the standards teachers are expected to meet, so that every teacher has the confidence to handle contentious issues without imposing a particular political or ideological perspective.

The 1996 Education Act aimed to ensure that our schools are politically neutral. On paper its requirements are powerful and clear. But it hasn't been enforced and we need proper mechanisms to ensure the law is followed.

Our Parent Pledge commits to creating these mechanisms, so that time spent in schools is focused on key subjects, raising standards and creating opportunity.

But while our schools must be politically neutral, they should not be neutral about our own country and our shared values.

In most of Europe, and most of the world, schools have long been expected to help children develop a positive sense of a shared national identity, along with knowledge of their national values and inheritance.

Our schools too should be charged with building a positive shared national identity in every child. Across the whole education programme children should learn about Britain's history, institutions, culture and shared values, giving them a sense of belonging and confidence in our country and its future.



Earlier this year, Kemi Badenoch commissioned Sir Robert Tombs and Baroness Spielman to work with the Shadow Education Team to look closely at keeping politics out of the classroom. This pledge forms part of this work.

We will replace the promotion of multiculturalism in ways that constantly emphasise difference, with a uniting national story and civic confidence.

We will not teach our children that “all cultures are equal”.

Instead, we will teach them why Britain’s shared civic culture matters.

Our 7 point pledge to parents: Politics out of the classroom but never our values



We will focus the time spent in schools on core subjects, raising standards.



We will not let trade union politics infect the classroom.



We will ensure there are consequences for when schools don't meet impartiality requirements.



We will make sure that your child is taught the history of our amazing country and our shared values.



We will make it easy for you to report failures of impartiality.



We will ensure that no girl is forced by her school to cover her hair for religious reasons. This principle will apply in every state school in England, including faith schools.



We will make sure that you can see any lesson materials used to teach your children.

Schools that unite, not divide

Inspection, and accountability for what schools teach

Schools receiving public money are not just accountable for exam results, but for the curriculum and the wider messages they convey. Inspection must have the capacity to identify politicisation, distortion and serious omissions. Inspection should be able to look at the school's curriculum and other strands of activity to see whether they are meeting the full set of purposes, not just the things that are measured through tests and exams. We will:

- Give Ofsted an explicit duty to inspect political impartiality.
- Restore sufficient subject-level inspection to examine curriculum content properly.
- Include lessons, assemblies, external materials and staff training within inspection.
- Train inspectors specifically in impartiality and contested issues.
- Amend inspection criteria covering personal development, inclusion, leadership and governance.
- Allow one-off inspections to address specific reported instances of impartiality breaches. Ofsted should be able to investigate a particular incident retrospectively, including the conduct and decisions of school leaders and trustees, rather than being limited to what inspectors observe at the time of an inspection. The recent case involving Jewish MP Damien Egan demonstrates the gap. After Bristol Brunel Academy postponed his planned visit following opposition from pro-Palestinian campaigners and members of the NEU, Ofsted carried out a snap inspection. However, the specific decision to postpone the MP's visit was not itself within the scope of that inspection. This meant Ofsted could assess the school's current approach to political impartiality, but could not use the inspection to reach findings on the specific decision that had prompted the concerns in the first place.¹

¹ The Times, 'Ofsted finds school that uninvited Jewish MP is "inclusive"', 28th January 2026, [link](#).

Teacher training

Teacher training should give teachers greater confidence to teach Britain's history honestly while also presenting a positive account of the country, its institutions and its future. The aim should not be to dictate political conclusions, but to ensure children encounter a balanced curriculum rather than one shaped by a particular political or ideological perspective.

Most new teachers may struggle to present something in a politically neutral way. It is difficult for anyone to step outside their own perspective and is a difficult skill which must be learned, not simply assumed. For this reason we will:

- Put an explicit political impartiality obligation into the Teachers' Standards, Initial Teacher Training framework, Early Career Framework and leadership qualifications.
- Reissue statutory impartiality guidance with practical, subject-specific examples on issues around climate, sex and gender etc.
- Introduce compulsory training on impartiality and contested issues.
- Include British history, institutions and civic culture in relevant subject training.
- Establish a national CPD programme for teachers, leaders, support staff and governors.
- Make compliance with the new training requirements a condition of accreditation for teacher-training providers.
- Require school leaders and governors to certify annually that appropriate training has taken place.
- Currently Ofsted can refer serious teacher misconduct to the TRA. We would require Ofsted to refer serious breaches of political impartiality to the TRA for consideration.

No more secret lessons: transparency for third party resources

The free-for-all approach to third party teaching materials has led to major problems. Materials are being provided by extreme and highly political campaign groups and used in ways that most parents find concerning. Highly contentious and extreme ideas about gender, race and Britain's history are being taught as fact.

This replacement of education by indoctrination would be concerning enough, but copyright law is being used to prevent the materials being used from being seen or debated by parents.

There must now be greater oversight of third-party curriculum and teaching materials used in schools:

- As a first step we will require all schools to publish the external organisations and materials they use for PHSE, allowing parents to share and discuss them.
- We will create a new mechanism to enable parents and educators to raise the alarm with DfE.

The teaching of citizenship and culture days

“Citizenship” has increasingly become a catch-all for issues that can and should be taught rigorously elsewhere in the curriculum. Climate change, for example, is properly taught through science and geography, where pupils can engage with the evidence and subject knowledge rather than political campaigning around it.

Well-meaning events outside formal lessons like “culture days” or “identity days” can also end up emphasising division rather than what unites us. Such days encourage pupils to wear national costume or religious dress based on their family heritage, fundamentally emphasising differences and divisions, rather than pupils’ shared British identity and culture. Some have made headlines after pupils were sent home for wearing British dress, further underlining how divisive and unhelpful these approaches are.²



- We will rewrite the citizenship curriculum to focus on the promotion of national identity, the importance of the rule of law and understanding British democracy.
- We will reject Labour’s plans to make citizenship a compulsory subject from primary school. The Curriculum and Assessment Review recommended making Citizenship statutory from Key Stage 1. The Government has accepted this recommendation. At this age, the priority should be securing the foundations in reading, writing and maths.
- We will prohibit schools from partaking in “culture” or “identity” days, which promote difference and disunity. Schools should bring children together, not emphasise what divides them. Such days also create opportunities for political or ideological agendas to enter the classroom. Culture or identity days can encourage children from a young age to define themselves and their classmates according to racial, religious or cultural categories. We will enforce this through inspection. Schools must instead focus on what pupils share: being members of the same school community and part of a common national story.

² BBC, ‘Girl in union jack couldn’t give “British” speech’, 15th July 2025, [link](#).

Churchill Prize and cultural curriculum

Moving from a culture that emphasises difference and division to one which builds a shared national culture cannot be achieved purely by rooting out illegal or divisive activities. We will also create new positive and uniting institutions.

- We will create a system of new national and local prizes and awards which schools can work towards, based on understanding Britain's extraordinary history and the roots of our constitution. This will be a kind of civic and academic equivalent of the Duke of Edinburgh's award and will encourage understanding of local and national history, our constitution and values.
- For primary schools we will create an aspirational set of activities that pupils could experience, and work across government to help more primary schools access these opportunities. This "cultural curriculum" could include things like visiting Parliament or our courts; visiting one of our national parks or great landscapes; experiencing some of Britain's traditional arts and culture; reading a classic British book, experiencing ancient buildings like cathedrals.

A new approach to teaching unions

We will end political indoctrination in our schools and move from a school culture which emphasises divisions rather than what unites all of us in Britain.

However, the context for this vital shift is not an easy one. Most teachers who join a trade union do so not as a political act, but for the same basic services as members of unions in other professions. The majority of teachers don't want to be sucked into political debate but the leadership of the main trade unions in education has long been captured by a small group of people with very extreme left wing views.

These extreme positions become a bigger problem when, against the wishes of most parents, union leaders want to use their position in schools to turn them into engines of extreme-left indoctrination.

The NEU branch in Bristol celebrated blocking a Jewish Labour MP, Damien Egan, from visiting one of his local schools.³ The NEU actively promotes "decolonising education."⁴ It promotes self-ID for children and the idea that schools should automatically affirm whatever "gender identity" children choose.⁵ It has campaigned to "disarm education", including blocking work experience for pupils at defence-linked firms⁶ and has, for a long period, campaigned against the anti-extremism programme Prevent⁷, which has operated under governments of all colours. Unions have been challenging the rule of law – including voting to defy the Supreme Court ruling on single sex provision.⁸

We will intensively monitor and use all powers to prevent extremists within trade unions from turning our schools into engines of extreme-left indoctrination. Any use of union materials in schools which breach impartiality requirements will be referred to the TRA.

³ The Jewish Chronicle, 'Outrage after NEU branch stopped Jewish MP from visiting local school', 13th January 2026, [link](#).

⁴ NEU, 'Decolonising Education', 4th July 2023, [link](#).

⁵ NEU, 'Right of trans and non-binary members to self-identify', 6th February 2026, [link](#).

⁶ Disarm Education, 'Motion for local/district branch general meetings', [link](#).

⁷ NEU, 'General Secretary address to conference', 6th April 2024, [link](#).

⁸ The Times, 'No legal definition of biological sex, teaching union members told', 10th June 2025, [link](#).

No compulsory hijabs in English schools

We will ensure that no girl is forced by her school to cover her hair for religious reasons. This principle will apply in every state school in England, including faith schools.

Where adult women choose to wear a hijab, that is their decision, and this is a free country. But we will not allow schools to force girls to cover their hair for modesty reasons.

A shared national story: reinforcing the curriculum, supporting our shared values

Kemi Badenoch commissioned Professor Robert Tombs to look at how the curriculum can best emphasise our national story.

He will help us ensure that across the curriculum we have a shared national story – one of pride and national identity.

There was already a very positive revision of the curriculum in 2015. But this needs to be reinforced across the whole school. We need to move away from the idea that our country and shared values should be regarded neutrally.

Changes to the curriculum will ensure that all children as future democratic citizens will know the basics of their country's whole history, within the context of world history. This should be done during the years when history is compulsory; and we will ensure that it can be done as an engaging, coherent and cohesion-building curriculum.



Education that unites: lessons from Europe

Amanda Spielman

Most countries across the world take national identity seriously in education: forming and promoting it in their youngest citizens, and making sure they understand what it means for them individually and collectively.

By contrast, England makes little effort. The current National Curriculum aims⁹, and subject aims and purposes¹⁰ (including those for citizenship¹¹) do not include forming or promoting national identity. In the secondary citizenship curriculum, there are some goals around knowledge of the UK and its democratic and administrative structures, and around building the capacity to explore political and social issues critically, but nothing at all aimed at building and sustaining national identity. In history, English and other humanities there is curriculum content that could be used for this purpose, but there is no encouragement for schools to do so.

The curriculum is specified in broad terms, and schools have considerable autonomy over what and how they teach. Furthermore only a minority of pupils study subjects such as history and citizenship after the age of 14¹². Inspection of what is taught in citizenship, or indeed any individual subject, is now very limited. Taken together, these factors mean most children's schooling is likely to do little to build a strong common identity as British citizens of the United Kingdom or, within that, as English. Children are however likely to have been exposed to currently fashionable narratives such as critical race theory.¹³

The recent Curriculum and Assessment Review offers nothing that would alter this position. It does touch on social cohesion and emphasises diversity, representation and social justice, but national identity is mentioned just once, in the context of sport.¹⁴

Yet elsewhere in the UK, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland all promote sub-national identity through their education systems (though not national identity at the United Kingdom level). For example, Wales has a citizenship framework document for 14–19-year-olds entitled 'Wales, Europe and the World' covering political, social, economic and cultural dimensions.¹⁵ Similarly one of the seven core entitlements in the Scottish Curriculum For Excellence is framed as "The world, Scotland's place in it and the environment";¹⁶ Both effectively promote local identity in part by largely ignoring the wider UK context in their framing.

Looking beyond the UK, it is in fact the norm for school systems to have as primary purposes the tasks of teaching children about their country and of building a positive shared national identity. The following table, reflecting a range of countries that are generally recognised as prosperous, reasonably unified and confident, illustrates this:

⁹ The National Curriculum in England, Framework document, December 2014, [link](#).

¹⁰ For example history: National Curriculum in England: history programmes of study, published 11th September 2013, [link](#).

¹¹ National Curriculum in England, citizenship programmes of study for key stages 3 and 4, [link](#).

¹² Ofqual data shows 16 year olds were entered for approximately 287,000 history GCSEs and 17,000 citizenship GCSEs in the most recent year's data, compared with 630,000 for mathematics, [link](#).

¹³ "From a 2022 YouGov survey reported by Policy Exchange, [link](#)": "A majority, 59 percent, of British school leavers say they have either been taught, or heard from an adult at school, about at least one of 'white privilege', 'unconscious bias' and 'systemic racism', three concepts associated with applied Critical Race Theory (CRT). This rises to 73 percent if we include Critical Social Justice (CSJ) approaches to gender, notably the idea of 'patriarchy' or that there are many genders." Of these, "two-thirds of young people say they were not told that there are respectable counterarguments to these ideas. This suggests that several million children may have been taught these . . . ideas as truth."

¹⁴ Curriculum and Assessment Review Final Report, November 2025, [link](#).

¹⁵ <https://hwb.gov.wales/api/storage/1a37f791-b5b7-4cb7-9b97-9f0027dd1041/wales-europe-and-the-world.pdf>

¹⁶ <https://education.gov.scot/curriculum-for-excellence/about-curriculum-for-excellence/what-is-curriculum-for-excellence/>

Country	Teaches about national identity	Promotes national identity	Basis for the promotion judgement
Estonia	Yes	Yes	Explicit curriculum aim “Estonian schools have the responsibility to safeguard and develop the Estonian nation, language and culture” ¹⁷
Australia	No overall national requirement	Contested	Australian National Curriculum Humanities and Social Studies strand “Citizenship, Diversity and Identity” ¹⁸
Netherlands	No mandated content	Yes	Schools must teach freedom, equality and solidarity as the basis of Dutch society ¹⁹
Norway	Yes	Yes	“Identity and cultural diversity” is one of six named core values: content such as “pupils shall learn about the values and traditions which contribute to uniting people in our country” ²⁰
Japan	Yes	Yes	2006 Fundamental Law of Education names “love of country” directly; moral education (2018) is a graded subject carrying this aim ²¹
France	Yes	Yes	EMC transmits a stated “socle de valeurs” (core value set) ²²
Denmark	Yes	Yes	Strong model of civic integrationism ²³
Singapore	Yes	Yes	“National education builds students' sense of identity, pride, and commitment to Singapore.” ²⁴
Sweden	Yes	Yes	2022 curriculum: Shared cultural heritage “provides a secure identity”; schools directed to “actively and consciously... influence and stimulate pupils to embrace the common values of our society” ²⁵

¹⁷ <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/akt/524092014014?leiaKehtiv>

¹⁸ Civics and citizenship aims and content for Years 7-10 are clearly aimed at fostering positive attitudes to Australian identity and citizenship, link; however the national curriculum is not enforced at state level.

¹⁹ <https://www.onderwijsinspectie.nl/onderwerpen/burgerschap/wettelijke-opdracht>

²⁰ <https://www.udir.no/lk20/overordnet-del/opplaringens-verdigrunnlag/1.2-identitet-og-kulturelt-mangfold?lang=eng>

²¹ Japanese Fundamental Law of Education, Article 2(5), link.

²² <https://www.education.gouv.fr/les-valeurs-de-la-republique-l-ecole-1109>

²³ See below.

²⁴ <https://www.beattysec.moe.edu.sg/student-life/cce/national-education/>

²⁵ Curriculum for Compulsory School, Preschool Class and School-Age, Lgr22, sections 1 and 2.1, link.

This international comparison shows clearly that most developed western countries believe that national cohesion matters, and that schooling is an important part of teaching about their countries and building a strong and positive national identity in young citizens. Most countries have some direct mechanisms - specific teaching about country, constitution, political and legal systems - as well as indirect teaching through taught curriculum in many subjects, with reinforcement through participation in school and community activities.



For example, in Denmark the civic integration model is long established and worth describing in some detail.

Denmark's early-years policy is designed to ensure that every child speaks fluent Danish by the time they start primary school, and it begins startlingly early. Every child is guaranteed a place from the age of six months; more than 80% of one-to two-year-olds and nearly 95% of three-to five-year-olds are in daycare, almost all of it state-provided. On top of this near-universal provision, several forms of targeted provision apply to make sure that children who do not speak Danish at home normally start nursery by the age of one, both to learn Danish and to be taught Danish culture and values.

Danish schooling begins with the Folkeskole, a combined primary and lower secondary school running from age 6 to 16, followed by upper secondary school to age 19. Alongside the usual basics, the Folkeskole makes History compulsory from year three, Christian studies and religious education compulsory throughout, and social studies compulsory for the final two years.

The "Folkeskole" is founded on the philosophy of the writer, poet, and philosopher N. F. S. Grundtvig (1783–1872). From its beginnings in the mid-19th century, the model was designed to emphasise "togetherness" and active participation in society, teaching national poetry and history as well as practical skills.

School education was to take place mainly within a national and patriotic horizon of understanding, while keeping an open mind towards broader cultural and intercultural outlooks; university, by contrast, was designed around a universal, humane and scientific outlook.

One of the main modern purposes of Danish schools is to root children in Danish culture. As the law puts it: The folkeskole "shall familiarize them with Danish culture and history, give them an understanding of other countries and cultures, [and] contribute to their understanding of the interaction between people and the environment . . ." and "prepare pupils to participate in a free and democratic society by developing their sense of co-responsibility and helping them understand their rights and duties. Accordingly, the daily life of the school shall be based on intellectual freedom, equality and democracy."²⁶

The requirement to teach students Danish culture dates from 1993, and Bertel Haarder (Liberal Party Minister of Education from 1982 to 1993 when this requirement was enacted, and again from 2005 to 2010) has argued that it was intended to provide an alternative to multiculturalism. He has also described history as one of the "culture carrying subjects" and argued that it "is about the people's sense of self" and must therefore "put special weight on the historical events that have been part of defining us as a people".

²⁶ Ministry of Education, [link](#).

In 2025, Denmark made its subject curriculum requirements advisory, but the texts still gives insight into the approach and show clearly how much importance Denmark places on its culture, values and national identity. The contrast with England is striking. Looking at the Danish documents for three subjects:

History is used “to build and strengthen the social cohesion in communities such as the national”. It further states that “historical narratives are crucial for the formation of identity” and that history “offers obvious possibilities for empathy and identification”.

Religious studies carries a similar emphasis: “Students must acquire knowledge about Christianity in a historical and contemporary context, as well as about the biblical stories and their significance for the values of our cultural community”.²⁷

Citizenship education documents characterise democracy as fragile: something that valuable that should not be taken for granted and must be valued and taught to each generation and embedded as a principle in everyday life.

Two other countries with some similarities with the UK are worth considering: Australia and Sweden.

Both have for many years benefited from strong national identity and high cohesion, transmitted through families and communities with little perceived need for substantial reinforcement in schools. Both also have very long-standing minority populations and languages around which there have long been political sensitivities.

Both adopted multiculturalism as a mechanism intended to build shared values and harmony, including among both established minorities and newer immigrants. In both cases this approach has been put under pressure by high rates of immigration, which means that many more children are now growing up in families and communities that are more deeply rooted in other cultures even though they are making their lives in a new country.

In both countries there is also a push from some parts of the political spectrum to emphasise critical narratives about country and history, even before a national identity is formed. As a result, both are reconsidering their approaches.

Sweden embraced a very open multiculturalism, devolving a great deal to individual schools and paying minimal attention to national identity. But in recent years, there has been a significant shift in thinking, prompted in part by serious social problems, including high crime, especially in and around Malmö. The 2022 national curriculum addresses this with an explicit statement that shared cultural heritage “provides a secure identity” and directs schools to “actively and consciously... stimulate pupils to embrace” common values.²⁸ But despite this, some Swedish policy makers still believe that their model is too weak. For example, the current leader of the Christian Democrats and Deputy Prime Minister, Ebba Busch, has consistently argued that Swedish schools need to do more to instil national identity and shared values in order to promote social cohesion.²⁹

²⁷ EMU, [link](#).

²⁸ Link above

²⁹ Eg here <https://swedenherald.com/article/busch-says-we-need-to-take-on-the-values-battle>



Thus, in recent years Sweden appears to have been looking towards Denmark for inspiration on building stronger national identity and cohesion. It has been more cautious than Denmark, reflecting a less confident political environment, but some steps have been taken, such as a national songbook for schools. Improving integration is now a live topic of national debate, although with a new government the policy direction may change.

A similar debate is starting in Australia. Earlier this year, the federal minister requested ACARA, the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, to review the curriculum³⁰ to strengthen teaching of core Australian values. The opposition education spokesman has supported this, stating that “the fundamental purpose of our schooling system is to mould the next generation of Australians in a way that supports our national unity and identity”.³¹ The Northern Territory government has taken this furthest, with a recent mandate that all children should stand to sing both verses of the Australian national anthem in school assemblies and that civics classes should teach students about national symbols and the meaning behind the anthem, with the aim of teaching children to be proud of their country.³²

Unsurprisingly these reforms are contentious in some quarters, and have been characterised as ‘forced assimilation’, mainly in relation to concerns about the protection of indigenous ethnic minority languages and cultures.³³ Yet it seems likely that schools will in future be expected to do more to contribute to forming a positive Australian identity than previously.

In conclusion, the UK appears to be an outlier, both in the status quo and in the direction of policy change (or rather the absence of policy change). This is especially striking given that in recent years there has been a tendency in Britain to load progressively more responsibility onto schools for solving societal problems.

³⁰ <https://jasonclare.com.au/media/education-ministers-meeting-communique-2/>

³¹ <https://www.kidsnews.com.au/society-culture/curriculum-rethink-to-strengthen-patriotism-and-fight-antisemitism/news-story/c873a36dfb99a0dface22a0f393e9b7f>

³² <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-01-27/nt-mandates-australian-anthem-be-sung-at-school-assemblies/106272914>

³³ Illustrated by this article, [link](#).

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