

Written evidence submitted by the Association of Teachers and Lecturers

About ATL

ATL, the education union, is an independent, registered trade union and professional association, representing approximately 160,000 teachers, head teachers, lecturers and support staff in maintained and independent nurseries, schools, sixth form, tertiary and further education colleges in the United Kingdom. AMiE is the trade union and professional association for leaders and managers in colleges and schools, and is a distinct section of ATL. We recognise the link between education policy and members' conditions of service.

ATL exists to help members, as their careers develop, through first rate research, advice, information and legal advice. Our evidence-based policy making enables us to campaign and negotiate locally and nationally. ATL is affiliated to the Trades Union Congress (TUC), Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU), European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) and Education International (EI). ATL is not affiliated to any political party and seeks to work constructively with all the main political parties.

ATL policy

1. ATL's education policy is underpinned by the professionalism of teachers. Teachers should be recognised for their knowledge, expertise and judgement, at the level of the individual pupil and in articulating the role of education in promoting social justice. Development of the education system should take place at a local level: the curriculum should be developed in partnership with local stakeholders and assessment should be carried out through local professional networks. Schools should work collaboratively to provide excellent teaching and learning with a broad and balanced curriculum, and to support pupils' well-being, across a local area. This means that mechanisms must be developed that ensure a proper balance of accountability to national government and the local community, and which supports collaboration rather than competition.
2. ATL believes that the work of the Children's Commissioner (CC) is vital in providing a much-needed voice for young people and children on the issues that affect their lives and their futures. This in turn can inform areas of practice, such as education, providing both researchers and practitioners with essential and independent information. The reports from the OCC have been ground-breaking in their depth and range; from the inquiries into exclusion and school admissions to child poverty and mental health.
3. The OCC shines a light on the circumstances in which many of the most vulnerable children and young people are living, from those in care, to those suffering abuse and those who are asylum seekers. The 2013 inquiry into

Child Sexual Exploitation is an excellent example of this and has strengthened the call, on evidence from young people who has been sexually exploited themselves, for PSHE in schools on a statutory basis.

4. The report *Ambitious for Children*, which sets out a five year plan of commitments is to be highly commended and ATL is delighted to be working with the OCC on the next phase of the Child Sexual Abuse Inquiry.
5. The independence of the CC is essential to the robust credibility of the research produced and to the voice of the CC when speaking out on various issues that affect children and young people. ATL believes that it is vital to have an independent champion for children and young people, who is adequately resourced and supported to defend their rights and be their voice at the highest level. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child requires such a post or ombudsman, of which ATL is fully supportive.
6. The OCC website is also a vital resource in supporting children and young people to know their rights in relation to equality and education and to question and challenge the way they may have been treated or their proposed treatment. We support the OCC in its work to increase the importance with which children and young people's rights, wishes and experiences are regarded. Mental health, child poverty, child sexual abuse, child asylum seekers and immigration, as well as safeguarding are all issues that ATL members feel very strongly about and wish to see the Government put far higher on its agenda, so that this generation of young people can reach their full potential.

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