

# Comparing Manifestos - Part 4

In the run up to this May's general election, Schools Week will analyse the manifestos of various education organisations, typically from opposite ends of the political spectrum. This fourth pre-election comparison looks at the National Association of Headteachers and Headteachers' Roundtable.

## THE HEADTEACHERS' ROUNDTABLE

The Headteachers' Roundtable was formed in October 2012 "out of frustration regarding current government educational policy and the Opposition response to it".

It is now made up of 12 headteachers from across the country and across the educational spectrum: Chris McShane, Quilley School of Engineering, Eastleigh, Hampshire; Dave Whitaker, Springwell ("Special") Community School and Barnsley PRU; Duncan Spalding, Aylsham High School, Norfolk; John Tomsett, Huntington School, York; Jon Chaloner, Glyn School, Epsom, Surrey and executive headteacher/chief executive of GLF Schools; Liam Collins, Uplands Community College, East Sussex; Rob Campbell, Impington Village College, Cambridge; Ros McMullen, David Young Community Academy, Leeds and chief

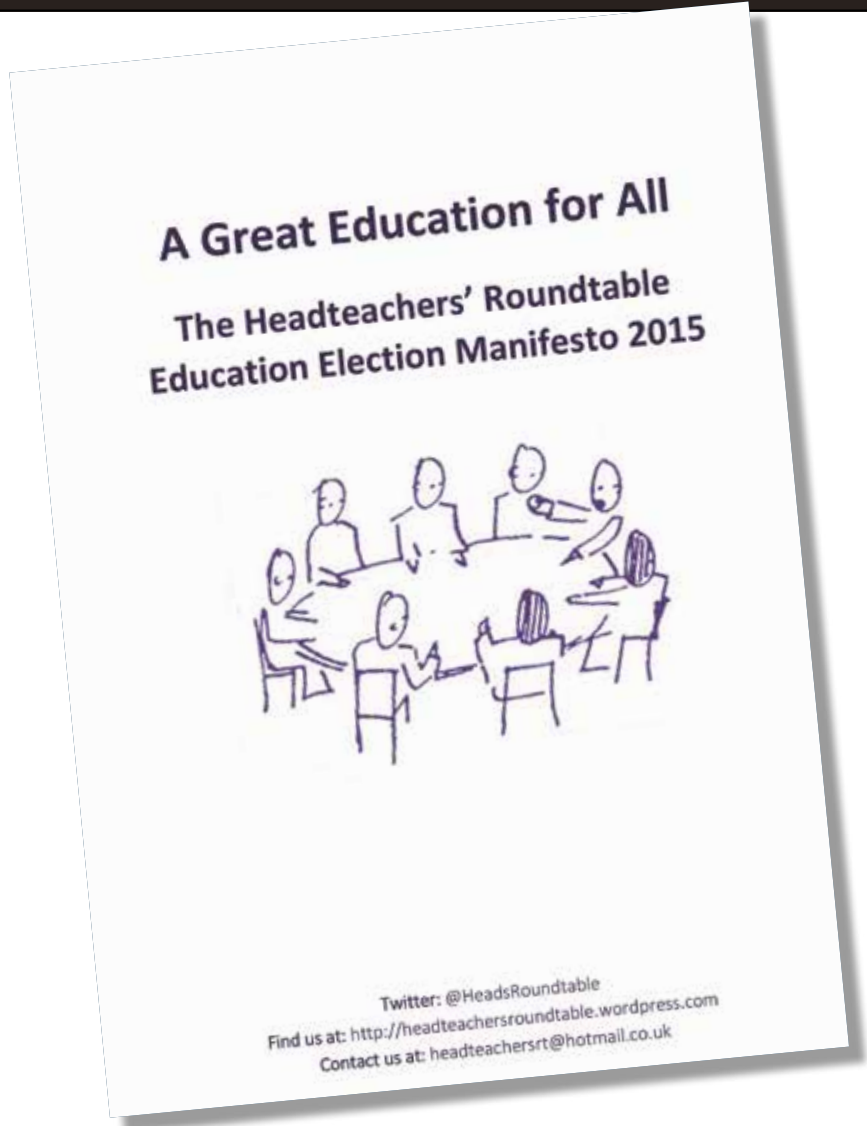
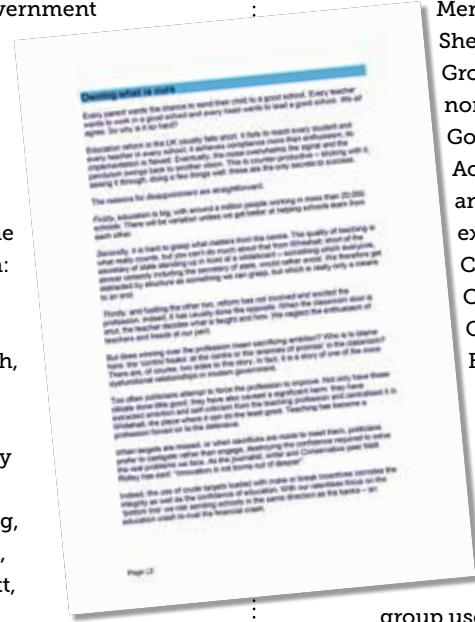
executive Leaf Academy Trust; Ruth Whymark, Cranmer Primary School, Merton, Surrey; Tom Sherrington, Highbury Grove School, Islington, north London; Vic Goddard, Passmores Academy, Harlow, Essex; and Stephen Tierney, executive director of Christ the King, St Cuthbert's & St Mary's Catholic Academies, Blackpool.

It has developed a large social media presence, with more than 20,000 followers on Twitter, and more than 50 people responded when the

group used its website last May to ask for ideas on policy areas.

The group then published a 10-point plan.

Former education secretary Michael Gove said at the time he would engage with the manifesto. Copies were also sent to Tristram Hunt and David Laws.



## THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF HEADTEACHERS

The National Association of Headteachers (NAHT) has almost 30,000 members. It was established in 1897 and initially only admitted headteachers. By the 1980s, deputies were allowed in; assistants in 2000.

Like many other of the trade unions, it operates at national, regional and local levels. Its members cover schooling from ages 3 to 19.

Its branch members have all been involved in the creation of the manifesto, which was launched last May – one of the first teaching trade union election publications to be produced.

The draft was then debated at its annual conference, where, with some adjustments, 90 per cent of delegates voted in favour of the document.



With almost a year since its initial publication, the NAHT said each of the political parties has had the chance to respond to the manifesto and its key aims.

General secretary Russell Hobby has said that the association has already begun working on some of its own ideas, including alternative league tables and an alternative to Ofsted, called Instead.

## WHAT THEY SAY



From back left: John Tomsett, Vic Goddard, Liam Collins, Chris McShane, Duncan Spalding, Jon Chaloner, Dave Whitaker. Front row: Rob Campbell, Ruth Whymark, Ros McMullen, Tom Sherrington

Being a "roundtable", there is no group leader as such.

The theme of its manifesto is improving, continuously, the quality of teaching in all schools. Raising the status of the profession is a key focus.

In its manifesto, the group said: "We believe that the education policy priorities for the next parliament must be focused upon continuously improving the quality of teaching in our schools. However, to enable teachers to teach as well as they possibly can, there are a number of key issues we need to address.

"Our system is increasingly fragmented in terms of institutions and qualifications;

the accountability system continues to suppress rather than unleash the creative energy of teachers; we're still not addressing some of the fundamental causes of underachievement and as applications for headships decline in number we're facing a leadership recruitment crisis.

"Our election manifesto is not an exhaustive list of all that needs to be done to improve education in this country, not by any means.

"However, we believe that our policy proposals represent a coherent road map to delivering the great education system the young people in this country deserve."

## MANIFESTO POINTS

1. A world class teaching profession. All teachers must belong to a College of Teaching and a professional development programme introduced for all new teachers leading to a masters equivalent degree after five years
2. A rigorous, inclusive and flexible curriculum and qualifications framework. Introduce a national baccalaureate and English and maths to be studied up to age 18
3. Intelligent accountability. Implement an intelligent Ofsted inspection framework and stabilise performance measures
4. Coherence in a fragmented system. Harmonise freedoms across maintained schools and academies, introduce transition standards grants to incentivise innovation towards systematic primary-secondary progression
5. Tackle under-achievement at the source: develop a national 0-5 parent support strategy, establish a national recruitment fund

## TO WHICH PARTY ARE THEY CLOSEST?

Headteachers' Roundtable describes itself as non-party political.

Some of its policy ideas do, however, chime with those of the Labour party.

The idea for maths and English to be studied, in some form, up to 18, and a "national baccalaureate" were some of

leader Ed Miliband's key ideas last March.

It also appears to be against the coalition policy of allowing unqualified teachers, again ringing closely to Labour party commitments to stop this practice and "raise the standard of the profession".

## MANIFESTO POINTS

1. Continued support for the establishment of a college of teaching, to help teaching establish itself as an autonomous, high status profession, using evidence to determine good practice and promote professional development
2. Introduce an office of education responsibility to devise and manage a five-year plan for reform, independent of government, to minimise the unpredictability of policy that harms pupils' chances, particularly at secondary school
3. Protect education funding from early years to school-leaving age, adopting a fair-funding formula so children can flourish regardless of their background or the challenges they face at home or in the classroom
4. Promote an alternative to the current adversarial inspection regime, where school leaders lead critical reviews of schools, working in partnership with Ofsted and not at odds with it
5. Ensure fairer admissions' policies prioritising children from low-income families and creating new schools and places in both the academy and maintained sectors, wherever they are most needed

## TO WHICH PARTY ARE THEY CLOSEST?

The College of Teaching got its strongest backing last week from the government, so the NAHT is sure to support this latest development, put forward by the coalition shortly before purdah.

Protection of funding for early years rings true with the Liberal Democrat promise not to cut funding in that area.

It is with the Greens, though, that there seems to be key agreement on Ofsted.

The party has committed to abolishing Ofsted and create a "supportive and collaborative" system, which sounds fairly similar to NAHT's idea for headteachers to work in "partnership" with the inspectorate.

## WHAT THE LEADER SAYS

The NAHT wants school leaders to "take back ownership" of the profession's standards and become responsible for each other.

Russell Hobby said: "The traditional definition of a manifesto is a list of promises not a list of demands. We think the profession needs to spend less time worrying about what politicians think and more time getting on with doing what is right – to crowd out political interference with professional leadership.

"That's what our manifesto tries to do – it creates as many projects for NAHT as it does for government. Fundamentally it says that, if we want control of our own destiny, we must do two things: take back ownership of standards and take responsibility for each other."

He added: "We have already seen many of the ideas start to feature in the main parties' manifestos. And each of the parties has written in the current edition of our magazine about how they might engage



Russell Hobby

with it. More importantly, we've already begun some of the projects without waiting for the election: researching school holidays, alternative performance tables, the Read On. Get On. campaign, our peer review alternative to Ofsted—Instead."