



2b Motion

Underfunding of education: stop the spiral of decline

Mover – Sharon Calvert

Seconder – John McGill

Conference notes the publication on 23 February 2026 of the Schools White Paper (England) and the associated consultation on special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Conference further notes the publication on 2 March 2026 of the Schools' Costs Technical Note, covering projections until 2029.

Conference notes that these publications confirm the assessment made by NASUWT over recent months: that education in England, and across the UK, is chronically underfunded and that there is insufficient funding for even the low pay rises recommended by the Secretary of State.

Conference notes the continuing crisis in our schools, colleges and education system. At the general election in July 2024, people voted for change and for an end to austerity. Despite this, little has been done to address 15 years of austerity, resulting in continuing cuts, job losses and falling real wages, which have undermined teachers and exacerbated the recruitment and retention problem in our schools and colleges.

Conference notes that the Westminster Government refused to fully fund the pay award for 2024, meaning many schools and colleges faced further cuts to staffing levels. This approach has been confirmed by the 2025 spending review and by the government directions to the School Teachers Review Body (STRB): teachers face the prospect of pay awards totalling just 6.5% over three years and the failure to fully fund even this. This policy can only worsen the crisis, forcing schools to make cuts, redundancies and job cuts. This in turn is exacerbating the pressure on teachers' already excessive workload and working hours.

Conference is concerned that the staffing and resource cuts made to jobs in the classroom continue, while the academy sector remains unregulated and Trust Central teams and some academy reserves continue to grow. Other academy trusts have cut staff and yet continued to run up huge debts, without any intervention from the Government, until it is too late. Education funding is not being prioritised for frontline teaching staff or well equipped and supported classrooms.

A vicious cycle

Teachers face a vicious cycle created by chronic and long-term underfunding by central government:

- Teachers face excessive workload and excessive working hours which worsen every time cuts are made and jobs are axed.
- School teachers' pay in state-funded schools has fallen in real terms since 2010, with the pay of the most experienced classroom teachers falling by 30%.
- The announcement of an increase in maternity pay to eight weeks full pay will still leave teachers significantly worse off than workers in many other parts of the public and private sectors.
- Punitive systems of inspection and accountability add to the pressure on teaching staff and recent changes to the inspection regime in England that have not only failed to resolve concerns but also risk worsening them and further embedding a punitive system that increases pressure on teachers.
- Education spending, as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product has fallen from 5.6% in 2010 to just 4.1% in 2024/25.

Conference further notes with concern that attempts to resolve the crisis in SEND provision (in relation to staffing, training and facilities) without significant new investment will further worsen all the challenges facing teachers, resulting in a deterioration in the conditions in which our members are required to work and a failure to improve provision for children.

Conference is disappointed that the Government's Schools White Paper and consultation on SEND, published in February, represent missed opportunities to address these and other fundamental issues affecting the education system and its workforce. The intention for all schools to join or form a trust will result in a continuation of education funding being prioritised for Trust Central teams and consultants, with little enforceable accountability.

Stop the race to the bottom; save our schools and colleges

The failure to provide adequate funding to meet the needs of schools is already forcing schools and colleges to make further cuts and force through further job losses.

Taken together, these measures make the working conditions for teachers and other school and college staff increasingly intolerable.

Conference instructs the National Executive to build our campaign against this vicious cycle of decline. This campaign must include a demand for a new deal for teachers and education and for sustainable long-term investment in schools and education (with a target of 6% of GDP) in order to improve the terms and conditions of employment of our members and to reverse pay erosion.

This campaign must include calls for:

- (i) significant new investment in all parts of the UK for all needs identified in relation to SEND/ Additional Learning Needs/Additional Support Needs (staffing, training and facilities);
- (ii) a reversal of job cuts; to deliver for students we need adequate staffing levels;
- (iii) urgent national action to tackle excessive workload and hours;
- (iv) withdrawal of any threat to the contractual provisions on working hours (1,265 hours) within teachers' terms and conditions;
- (v) the introduction in all state-funded schools of maternity provision granting 52 weeks of full pay, with the funding from government to support this;
- (vi) fully funded, real-terms and above-inflation pay increases which restore the pay lost over 15 years;
- (vii) national pay and conditions for any person working in a state-funded school, including Trust Central teams;
- (viii) accountability for academy trusts, and effective, swift mechanisms for intervention when trusts fail to manage public money effectively; and
- (ix) regulation of supply teacher agencies to ensure fair pay for supply teachers and lower costs to schools.

Conference further mandates the National Executive, as appropriate, to initiate a national ballot for industrial action (strike action and action short of a strike) if the Government fails to address the urgent needs set out above.



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