

GMB CONGRESS 2018

CEC SPECIAL REPORT

SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

**WE ARE
GMB
UNION**

1. Introduction

- 1.1. GMB is the union for support staff in schools and colleges. Education workers have represented our single largest area of membership growth since the National Agreement was reached with the then Labour Government in 2003.ⁱ School support staff make an invaluable contribution to children and parent's lives and GMB is proud to represent them.
- 1.2. More than 600,000 people are employed in school support staff roles in the UK. The number of support staff roles has increased significantly over the last twenty years: the number of FTE teaching assistant posts in secondary schools in England rose from 12,500 in 2000 to 50,100 in 2016.ⁱⁱ
- 1.3. GMB's position as one of only three unions recognised to represent support staff in schools at a national and local level in England and Wales was recently reaffirmed by a TUC agreement under which the National Education Union agreed not to actively recruit support staff or seek national or local recognition to negotiate on their behalf for collective bargaining purposes.
- 1.4. Schools and colleges face a funding crisis and support staff are under threat. 11,000 school caterers, caretakers and other support staff classed as working in auxiliary roles lost their jobs between 2015 and 2016, and over three thousand teaching assistant posts in secondary schools were also lost.ⁱⁱⁱ Thousands more staff have had their hours reduced.
- 1.5. Ministers hold almost no information on support staff pay, terms and conditions and skills, and no original research has been commissioned since 2010. Ministers and civil servants know far less about support staff than they do about teachers and lecturers. There are no official figures that relate to support staff employment in colleges. When it comes to policy decisions and funding allocations, our members are suffering from the soft bigotry of unequal interest and knowledge.
- 1.6. Support staff face significant challenges in the years ahead. The challenge for GMB is to defend jobs and terms of employment at a time when funding is constrained and falling in real-terms, while also raising the status of the profession to ensure that our members' skills and experience are recognised by employers and the wider public.
- 1.7. This Special Report is intended to set out GMB policies on a number of the pressing challenges which can also be used as organising priorities. As such it incorporates wording from a number of motions previously passed by Congress. Model policies have been produced by GMB for schools and academies organising activity, as well as for supporting members during appraisal, capability, disciplinary and grievance procedures.
- 1.8. Although much of the evidence on funding cuts in this report is drawn from England, the new analysis presented here on teaching assistants' qualification levels is drawn from a UK-wide sample.

2. Support staff – education’s hidden professionals

- 2.1. Hidden Professionals is GMB’s longest running education campaign. As Mary Turner said, support staff are highly skilled but ‘for too long they have been at the butt of low pay, no holiday or sickness pay, no career structure and, in many cases, no respect.’^{iv}
- 2.2. Schools and colleges rely on the skills and experience that our members provide, but support staff are finding it increasingly difficult to access training and Continuing Professional Development (CPD). Most support staff are stuck at the top of their pay band and too many schools and colleges fail to offer clear routes for career progression.
- 2.3. GMB fought for many years to have the professional status of support staff recognised. This work culminated in the passing of legislation that established the School Support Staff Negotiating Body (SSSNB) in 2009. This organisation was scrapped by the incoming Conservative and Liberal Democrat government in 2010. Plans to establish national Professional Standards for Teaching Assistants were vetoed by Conservative Ministers in 2015.
- 2.4. Instead of the status of the profession being raised, support staff employment is under attack instead. In 2013 Michael Gove, the then Education Secretary, reportedly considered telling schools to make teaching assistants redundant.^v The Department for Education (DfE) has published ‘benchmarking’ tools that encourage employers to compare their expenditure on support staff to that of other schools. GMB has used the Freedom of Information Act to obtain a document commissioned by the DfE which said that:

‘Employing fewer teaching assistants ... may be a means by which schools could operate more efficiently without adversely affecting student outcomes. ... Groups or clusters of schools, operating within relatively close geographical proximity, can share a school business manager (SBM) ... without any obvious adverse impact on student outcomes.’^{vi}
- 2.5. Schools could not function without the teaching assistants and school business managers that we represent. GMB will always fight to defend our members’ jobs and vigorously resist all attempts to denigrate support staff workers’ contributions and cut their jobs at a national, local and Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) level.
- 2.6. Any assertions that support staff are unskilled or unqualified is based on prejudice and ignorance, not evidence. GMB analysis shows that teaching assistants are more likely to hold a degree or other higher education qualification than the average for all workers. Only 2.9 per cent of teaching assistants do not hold a qualification, compared to 4.3 per cent of all workers.

Highest qualification obtained – percentage breakdown of UK workforce^{vii}

	All workers	Teaching Assistants
Degree or equivalent	34.3	29.3
Other higher education	9.7	16.2
GCE A level or equivalent	23.6	31.5
GCSE grades A*-C or equivalent	19.6	17.5
Other qualification	7.5	2.7
No qualification	4.3	2.9
Don't know	0.9	0
No answer	0.1	0

- 2.7. GMB notes that, before the National Agreement was reached in 2003, teachers spent more than two thirds of their time on tasks other than teaching, and that the expansion of support staff numbers has been proven to have improved pupil behaviour and reduce teachers' workloads and stress levels.
- 2.8. The Government's last published review of the evidence (published in 2011) on support staff effectiveness quoted several studies that demonstrated the positive impact they can have on behaviour, inclusion and academic attainment.^{viii} The evidence that critics of hiring support staff have selectively quoted is a decade out of date and fails to include a control group. Not a single GMB member should be made redundant on the basis of these arguments.
- 2.9. According to a survey conducted by GMB London Region, 31 per cent of support staff are expected to deliver lessons in the absence of a qualified teacher (of whom 70 per cent do not receive any extra pay).^{ix} It is unacceptable that many of our members report that they are inappropriately assessed against criteria that were drawn up to measure teacher performance.
- 2.10. The best way to maximise the public investment in support staff is to make training, development opportunities, and career progression the norm – not the exception. Teachers and leaders are often untrained in their responsibilities as managers and employers of support staff. The Government should work closely with the support staff and teaching unions to raise the professional status of everyone who works in schools and colleges. The SSSNB should be re-established and charged with developing national pay and career progression frameworks.
- 3. Violence in schools**
- 3.1. No-one should live in fear of coming to work but most support staff have been subjected to violent assaults. Attacks can have leave lasting physical and mental scars and leave workers feeling powerless when management are unwilling to acknowledge the problem or take action. A GMB survey found that one in five support staff workers experiences violence at least once a week.^x

- 3.2. The rate of attacks on education workers is increasing. Figures obtained by the GMB from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) show that there was a 24 per cent increase in the number of injuries to education workers – including in colleges - caused by acts of violence reported under the RIDDOR regime between 2012/13 and 2016/17. Under current regulations, injuries must be reported to the HSE if they result in more than seven days being taken off work, or if they cause a ‘specified injury’ which can include: loss of consciousness, bone fractures, amputation, or asphyxiation.^{xi} One in ten injuries to education workers that are reported to the HSE are caused by violence.
- 3.3. Our members report being strangled, punched, kicked, attacked with compasses and sharpened pencils, and having tables and chairs thrown at them. Some members report that schools do not take attacks on support staff as seriously as they would on teachers, and that pupils know that they face little deterrent if they assault support staff workers.
- 3.4. Our members report that the majority – 57 per cent – of violence incidents come from pupils.^{xii} A substantial minority of attacks are made by adults. Parents, former pupils, visitors and intruders all pose a risk of potential violence. Gang related violence is also a factor in some schools.
- 3.5. Zero tolerance policies must be worthy of the name. All staff should have the right to feel protected at work and to know that will be treated fairly and equally when incidents of violence occur. GMB has developed materials for use by activists and members to help put pressure on schools to take stronger action to prevent violence and ensure that sanctions are issued against the aggressor whenever incidents occur.

4. Fragmentation and privatisation

- 4.1. The education landscape has changed beyond recognition over the last decade. Half of all pupils are now taught in an academy or free school in England. Vital local authority services have been broken up and de-funded. Our education system is increasingly being run in the interests of private and personal profit, not the best interests of pupils. GMB opposes the policy of academisation and calls for the local accountability of schools in England to be restored.
- 4.2. GMB regrets the fact that the academies programme was started under the last Labour Government, and we believe that the objective of securing additional funding for schools in deprived areas could have been achieved at a lower cost through other means. The policy opened the door to the wholesale fragmentation of the education system under the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats. We call on the next Labour Government to reform the education system to restore the oversight and co-ordinating role of democratically accountable local authorities, and we commend devolved governments for maintaining the crucial link between schools and the communities they were built to serve.
- 4.3. At a time when funding cuts are biting, fragmentation has also led to a sharp increase in executive salary levels. 121 academy trusts paid out individual salaries of over £150,000, and

the highest paid Multi Academy Trust chief executive received £420,000 in 2016 – three times the Prime Minister’s salary and the equivalent of 35 teaching assistants’ salaries.^{xiii} The best paid sixth-form college principal received over £400,000 in basic salary in 2015/16.^{xiv} These excessive salaries all represent money that could and should be spent on pupils and improving low-paid staff members’ wages instead.

- 4.4. Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) are, increasingly, centralising funding and support staff roles at the same time as raising trust annual charges on schools. In one MAT where GMB opposed restructuring proposals, the trust raised annual charges by a total of 66 per cent in one year and increased its chief executive’s pay by 13 per cent while proposing to cut the numbers of site staff and pooling caretaker services between schools. Public money is scandalously being used to fund on expensive purchases from companies in which trustees or members of their families have a financial (formally known as ‘related party transactions.’) The Public Accounts Committee recently said that ‘the Department for Education’s rules around related party transactions are too weak to prevent abuse.’^{xv}
- 4.5. We note with alarm the example of Wakefield City Academies Trust (WCAT), which collapsed last year and announced that it was seeking to divest itself of 21 schools. WCAT diverted school reserves to the central trust, leading to allegations of ‘assets stripping,’^{xvi} and paid hundreds of thousands of pounds to a company controlled by a relative of a senior management figure.^{xvii} Approximately 40,000 pupils are trapped in ‘zombie academies’ after their schools were abandoned by, or stripped from, their parent trust.^{xviii} GMB believes that when academy sponsors fail or walk away from a school then that school or group of schools should revert to local authority maintained status.
- 4.6. Despite a national shortfall in pupil places and the failings of the academies system, and despite their legal duty to ensure that adequate numbers of school places are provided, the Westminster Government has denied local authorities the right to create new schools. GMB recognises that the new categories of schools introduced by Ministers in their place represent a threat to our members’ pay, terms and conditions. Support staff who work in free schools earn on average 12 per cent less than those employed in local authority maintained or academy schools.^{xix} It is vital that local authorities regain their right to open new schools.
- 4.7. Accurate figures on the outsourcing of services within schools are not available, but it is clear that an increasing number of jobs and services have been put out to tender – undermining collective bargaining and threatening our members’ terms and conditions. According to the private consultancy Arvato, the number of local government contracts put out to tender increased by 45 per cent between 2015 and 2016. ^{xx} The School Meal Plan Group reported in 2013 that a third of school catering services were provided by private contractors.^{xxi}
- 4.8. GMB has a long and proud history of opposing PFI and other so-called Public-Private Partnership schemes. TUPE transfers of staff under PFI deals has undermined pensions entitlements and led to ownership of public assets being conferred to speculators and non-UK taxpayers. In Scotland, more than 200 schools built under the PFI scheme are now at least in

part owned by offshore investors.^{xxii}

- 4.9. Schools and colleges must be run in the interests of pupils and the people who work in them – not personal and private profit. The last decade has witnessed the creeping privatisation of education services. The next ten years must see a renewed role for local authorities, an end to outsourcing and excessive executive pay, and the injection of funding that schools desperately need to deliver teaching and learning environments that are fit for the 21st century.

5. Structures and accountability

- 5.1. Schools should be accountable to parents, staff and local communities. This is best achieved through appropriate oversight by supportive local authorities and governing bodies that represent the combined interests of those groups. GMB does not believe that pre-existing accountability structures were perfect, but the quality of scrutiny has diminished in recent years (a development that has been compounded by the loss of local authority governor support services).
- 5.2. The academies and free schools programme was designed to engineer a massive transfer of power from local communities to central government and the Secretary of State. In practice, the Department for Education cannot begin to provide meaningful oversight of the more than six thousand schools and colleges that have been transferred to academy status.
- 5.3. The Government claims that it has filled the accountability gap through the creation of Regional School Commissioners. In practice, these bodies have unclear powers and responsibilities. They are opaque, under-resourced, and removed from the concerns of our members. GMB does not believe that Regional Schools Commissioners are adequate replacements for effective local authority oversight.
- 5.4. Academy trusts are not obliged to maintain community and staff representatives – or even to retain school level governing bodies at all. This reduces scrutiny of management decisions and removes one of the main means of redress when support staff are being bullied or inappropriate policies are being pursued. Despite clear guidance from the Information Commissioner's Office that individual school governing body minutes and MAT board minutes should be published, this frequently does not happen in practice. Even where school governing bodies are retained, they often fail to carry out their duty to regularly review the competence of senior management (including headteachers).
- 5.5. All schools should have their own governing bodies. Governing body and trust board minutes and other accountability documents should be regularly and proactively published. Community and staff roles should be guaranteed on those governing bodies; and staff governor roles should be reserved for support staff as well as teachers.
- 5.6. Problems of accountability are not confined to academies or free schools, and GMB notes with alarm the case raised by members in the Southern Region of a senior leadership figure in a

voluntary aided school who is reported to have sprayed a fire extinguisher directly at a teaching assistant. This individual was subsequently charged with assault, but he has not faced internal disciplinary action (PS08, Public Services Section Conference 2018).^{xxiii} This decision was taken by the school's governors. In a voluntary aided status school, the majority of governors are appointed by the school's controlling religious body. GMB believes that governing bodies must contain a range of diverse and independent voices if they are to provide effective scrutiny, and that no single organisation – religious or secular – should be able to determine the majority membership of a governing body.

6. The education funding crisis

- 6.1. Theresa May has claimed that the Conservatives 'have protected the schools budget.'^{xxiv} The reality is that funding has failed to keep pace with inflation and rising pupil numbers. The National Audit Office estimated in December 2016 that mainstream schools face an average 8 per cent real-terms per-pupil funding cut by 2019/20 (or a £3 billion real-terms shortfall).^{xxv}
- 6.2. Funding shortfalls represents the single greatest immediate threat to our members' employment and their quality of life at work. GMB members have been asked to provide for themselves such basic essentials as soap and toilet paper because their schools say they can no longer afford them. A school in Theresa May's own constituency wrote to parents appealing for £190 so it could purchase 'pens, pencils, exercise books and paper.'^{xxvi} A recent survey by the NAHT found that 37 per cent of headteachers had cut the number, or hours, of teaching assistants within the last year due to funding constraints.^{xxvii}
- 6.3. GMB is a part of the School Cuts coalition of education trade unions which is campaigning to secure real-terms funding increases for schools to match rising pupil numbers. The campaign has produced estimates of future funding reductions to individual schools, and further campaigning work is planned during 2018/19. The group estimates that £2.8 billion has been cut from school budgets since 2015.^{xxviii}
- 6.4. Ministers' claim that an additional £1.3 billion has been found to boost the schools' budget should be treated with caution. No new money has been provided; the funding will be transferred from other parts of the wider education budget. The DfE has said that the money will be created by taking:
 - £420 million from the main capital budget;
 - £280 million from the free schools programme; and
 - Reprioritising £250 million in 2018-19 and £350 million in 2019-20.^{xxix}
- 6.5. This 'new' funding is therefore the result of cuts to other parts of the education budget, including to school maintenance and building programmes which are already severely underfunded. In addition, the Department's Permanent Secretary admitted to MPs on the Public Accounts Committee in October that civil servants have so far been unable to identify the detailed sources of these putative savings and accepted that the Government's plans were

'vague.'^{xxx}

- 6.6. Non-mainstream schools also face significant funding challenges. Our classroom-based members spend most of their time supporting children with a Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), and special schools contain a higher concentration of support staff than their mainstream equivalents. The Higher Needs Funding block has arguably never been sufficient to meet the needs of SEND children, and recent changes have placed further strains on high needs budgets. Specifically, local authorities have lost the ability to transfer funds from the main school funding block to plug shortfalls in the high needs funding block. This change has already led to reduced provision, assessment delays and staff being forced to deliver more SEND-related work with fewer resources.
- 6.7. Agreement has now been reached between the National Employers and the Local Government National Joint Council (NJC) Trade Union Side on the local government pay offer for 2018/19 and 2019/20 following a full ballot of GMB's local government membership. This offer will raise pay for most support staff covered by the NJC above inflation for the first time in almost a decade.^{xxxi} No new money has been made available to fund these increases. GMB will campaign to ensure that all school staff covered by the NJC receive the pay rise they are due; and we will continue to lobby the Government and opposition political parties to ensure that new funding is made available to fund proper pay rises for all public sector workers. We will continue to work with employers and local authorities to ensure the best possible outcomes for our members during restructuring and other consultation processes.

7. Pay and terms and conditions

- 7.1. Most support staff are dissatisfied with pay levels that fail to reflect their levels of skill, knowledge and experience. Pay has not kept pace with inflation as real wages have been severely eroded by eight years of pay freezes and capped one per cent increases. According to the Office for National Statistics, on average school administrators across Great Britain earned £16,262 and teaching assistants earned £12,123 (gross) in 2017^{xxxii} - by way of comparison, the average teacher's salary in state funded schools in England was £36,900 in 2016.^{xxxiii}
- 7.2. In line with our national policy on minimum wage rates, we believe that all school support staff should be paid a real living wage of at least £10 an hour.
- 7.3. School support staff have been subjected to severe real-terms pay cuts as a consequence of the decision by local authority leaders and Ministers to impose seven years of pay constraints from 2009/10 onwards. Our members' salaries have lost over ten per cent of their value in real terms, and some of our members have lost over ten thousand pounds in real-terms – imposing real pressure on their ability to make ends meet. Support staff in some colleges have not received any pay rise at all in recent years. GMB was the only union to raise the extent of real-terms pay cuts to school support staff at a national level through the Pay Pinch campaign, and

we were the only union that calculated the total real-terms financial loss that support staff have suffered.

Examples of cumulative real-terms loss of earnings, 2010 – 2017

Job Role	Lost Earnings
Business Manager	£13,573
Cover Supervisor	£7,160
Higher Level Teaching Assistant	£9,200
Lab Technician	£6,351
Library Assistant	£6,659
Library Manager	£9,884
Teaching Assistant	£6,531
www.paypinch.org	

- 7.4. GMB notes that 89 per cent of support staff are female,^{xxxiv} and that women in schools are bearing the brunt of job and salary cuts. We condemn these policies that in practice discriminate against women and fail at least the spirit of the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- 7.5. Support staff are regularly pressured to work during otherwise unpaid breaks, and both before and after their contracted hours. GMB research shows that school administrators are twice as likely as the private sector average to regularly work unpaid overtime.^{xxxv} School support staff should be paid for all the hours they work.
- 7.6. The overwhelming majority of support staff are employed on term-time contracts which only entitle them to 39 weeks of pay a year – in sharp contrast to teachers who are paid for 52 weeks of work. These contracts are often confusing worded, inflexible and deny staff a fair holiday entitlement (such as can be the case when staff fall ill during the school holiday period).
- 7.7. Obscure and poorly constructed regional formulas for determining annualised pay rates deny hundreds of pounds a year to support staff workers in some areas of the country, compared to workers on nominally the same annual salary who happen to live in a different region. GMB is working with other local government unions and the LGA to try to redress the failings of the term-time contract system, and it is our policy to bargain for the best possible contracts for our members.
- 7.8. Apprenticeships can be a valuable route into the world of work and GMB is working to represent and improve the position of support staff apprentices within schools. There are real fears, however, that poor quality and exploitative apprenticeships schemes are being used to undermine the existing workforce.
- 7.9. Three quarters of teaching assistant apprenticeship roles advertised during August 2017 were paid just £3.50 an hour – the legal minimum starting rate the first year of an apprenticeship – and it was unclear in several adverts what training, if any, would actually be provided. In one

case, a £3.50 apprenticeship was advertised by an Multi Academy Trust that had recently attempted to make GMB members redundant. Apprenticeships must not be used as a pool of cheap labour to replace existing support staff workers.^{xxxvi}

8. Free school meals

8.1. GMB is the union for school catering and lunchtime supervision staff. The union has long campaigned for high-quality, nutritious school meals to be made available to all pupils. As GMB's late President Mary Turner, who was at the forefront of the campaign for universal free school meals for four decades, wrote in 2013:

'A wealth of evidence shows that good school meals improve learning and behaviour and reduce truancy. ... Tragically, hunger is a daily reality for some children in Britain today. GMB members working schools encounter children with no food at home, and see packed lunches of no more than crisps or chocolate, because parents are struggling to make ends meet.'^{xxxvii}

8.2. There is a strong body of evidence that supports the case for universal free school meals. 8 per cent of children who do not receive school meals bring nothing to school for lunch. In 2010 only one per cent of packed lunches were found to meet all nutritional standards.^{xxxviii} The School Meal Plan group, the work of which was commissioned by Michael Gove, recommended in 2013 that *'the government should embark upon a phased roll out of free school meals for all primary school children.'*^{xxxix} Ministers should now adopt this recommendation.

8.3. The case for free school meals is strengthened by the outcomes of pilots funded by the last Labour Government in Hull, Durham, and schemes operated by Labour-led councils in London including Islington, Newham, and Southwark. GMB commends the Labour leadership of the Islington London Borough Council for making free school meals available to all children while encouraging parents to register, securing up to £1,320 per child from central government funding and helping to protect staff posts.^{xl}

8.4. GMB was one of the first organisations to protest against the Government's plan to impose an arbitrary £7,400 free school meals eligibility cap on household earnings where parents or carers are in receipt of Universal Credit. We were the only recognised support staff union that made a submission to the Department for Education's consultation on the eligibility changes.^{xli}

8.5. The Government's policy of imposing a £7,400 household earnings cap – which is not linked to price or wage inflation – will have a devastating impact on thousands of low income families. When the National Minimum Wage next rises in April 2019, a household in which parents or carers earn the NMW will have to cut one hour's work a week in order to retain free school meal entitlements. This arbitrary 'cliff edge' makes a mockery of the Government's stated intention of 'making work pay.'

- 8.6. The DfE says that around ten per cent of children who currently receive free school meals would lose their entitlement under the new criteria, once transitional protections are removed. This means that over a hundred thousand children would lose their free school meals compared to the pre-Universal Credit eligibility criteria. The Children's Society estimates that up to a million children could lose their free dinners compared to the current temporary arrangement under which all households that receive Universal Credit are entitled to receive free school meals.^{xliii}
- 8.7. Cuts to free school meals entitlements represents a threat to the jobs of catering and lunchtime supervision staff, especially in those local authorities that have a higher than average level of entitlement and uptake. GMB will continue to campaign to end this unfair and arbitrary cap and ensure that future governments expand – not cut – free school meal provision.
- 8.8. The first impacts of the new policy will be felt from the start of the new school year in September 2018, when pupils making the transition from primary to secondary education will lose their right to receive free school meals if their parents or carers do not meet the new eligibility criteria. GMB will conduct further research work and launch a national campaign that makes local materials available to activists ahead of the start of the 2018/19 academic year.

9. The condition of the education estate

- 9.1. Unsafe buildings are a daily reality for our members. No-one should have to put up with exposed wiring and crumbling window frames, but 60 per cent of school buildings date from before the mid-1970s. Maintenance and investment funding has more than halved since 2010, and according to the National Audit Office it would cost a £13.8 billion to bring the whole of the school estate in England up to a satisfactory standard (of which £6.7 billion would have to be spent on repairing major defects and buildings at risk of critical failure).^{xliiii} GMB welcomes Labour's commitment to invest £14 billion in school buildings to bring them up to modern standards.^{xliiv}
- 9.2. The FE sector is also in dire need of investment. Unlike schools, colleges do not qualify for direct, guaranteed capital investment funding streams, and banks are increasingly unwilling to lend to fund projects. Capital investment has fallen by over a third in real-terms since 2010. It is vital that colleges also receive an injection of funding to pay for essential maintenance and new buildings.^{xliv}
- 9.3. Dangerous cladding materials – of the same or similar type that were used on Grenfell tower – have been installed at many schools, colleges and universities over recent years. The majority of suspect materials remain in place a year on from the Grenfell tower, despite the Government conducting an audit of potential risks. Ministers should publish a plan to install adequate numbers of sprinklers and remove any dangerous cladding materials from all schools.
- 9.4. Asbestos remains an urgent concern for education workers. Asbestos has been banned from all new school works since 1999 but the National Audit Office has said that the substance is

still 'a significant, and potentially dangerous' presence in most schools.^{xlvi} Professor Julian Peto, Cancer Research UK Professor of Epidemiology, has estimated that between 200 and 300 people may die each year due to exposure to asbestos as pupils during the 1960s and 1970s.^{xlvii} Although the Department for Education requires schools to hold registers on asbestos on site, it does not collect that information itself. The true extent of asbestos prevalence in schools and colleges is therefore unknown. The Government should collect and publish information that shows where asbestos is still present in schools and other educational sites.

- 9.5. 138 people died of mesothelioma between 2011 and 2015 whose last occupation was clearly recorded as an educational role, of whom 27 can be positively identified as former support staff workers.^{xlviii} These figures do not cover all support staff roles and they do not monitor deaths over the age of 75. These factors, in addition to the fact that only the last known occupation is recorded, means that these figures underrepresent the scale of the human cost that this debilitating illness has inflicted on education workers. GMB, through its membership of the Asbestos in Schools Campaign and the Joint Union Asbestos Campaign (JUAC), has called for the phased removal of all asbestos from all schools by 2028.

10. Services for children with additional learning needs

- 10.1. GMB believes that all children should have the right to be taught in a supportive setting that gives them their best chance of achieving their full potential. Schools can only create inclusive environments due to the skills, experience and dedication of support staff, and it is time that this contribution is recognised.
- 10.2. Support staff spend most of their time working with children who have additional learning needs, either individually or in groups. These children may have English as an Additional Language (EAL), sometimes complex medical needs, or a Special Educational Need and Disability (SEND). The average special school employs 1.8 teaching assistants for every teacher, compared to 0.6 teaching assistants for every teacher in the average mainstream school, and GMB represents thousands of support staff in special schools.
- 10.3. Many of our members have highly developed skills which they provide to schools for low rates of remuneration. These can include language skills (including signing), experience of supporting children with potentially highly complex SEND conditions, such as autism, and delivering targeted interventions.
- 10.4. Support staff's expertise is not recognised in the current system. Some of our members have been downgraded from higher level teaching assistant to teaching assistant posts due to funding restriction. Others are their school's main point of reference on SEND, but only qualified teachers are currently able to hold a special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo) role, which usually entitles them to a seat on the school's Senior Leadership Team (SLT). In practice, this can mean that HLTAs with a SEND specialism can be managed by a teacher who holds fewer qualifications and less experience than they do. It is a reflection of the unfair and

arbitrary professional divide within the education system that becoming a school business manager is currently the only means for support staff to sit on an SLT. Support staff should be able to become their school's special educational needs co-ordinator with an appropriate increase in pay to reflect additional duties and responsibilities undertaken.

- 10.5. SEND diagnosis rates have fallen sharply in schools as funding cuts have bitten and eligibility criteria have been changed. According to the Department for Education figures, the proportion of pupils identified as having SEN in mainstream English schools fell from 21 percent in 2010 to just 13 per cent in 2016 – one of the lowest rates in the industrialised world. This means that 500,000 pupils with a SEND have disappeared from schools' rolls since 2010 (a fall of a third).^{xlix} This decline in diagnosis rates can cause resource allocation and classroom management problems due to children's needs not being identified, and it is believed to be a factor behind an apparent rise in the number of illegal or 'informal' exclusions of children with SEND.^l
- 10.6. Cuts to SEND provision pose a risk to our members' jobs. There is a proven link between a school's SEND intake and their tendency to hire support staff. In some cases, our members' contracts are linked to the presence of individual children with specific needs in a school - should that child move school, or cease to attend school, then funding for the post will be withdrawn.
- 10.7. Support staff are increasingly expected to deliver complex interventions as school or local authority specialist posts have been deleted, meaning that our members are expected to fulfil the functions previously performed by school nurses, physiotherapists, and speech and language therapists. A 2016 survey by GMB London Region found that support staff are being regularly required to carry out complex medical tasks, including supporting children with type 1 diabetes, cerebral palsy and heart conditions. Most staff did not receive additional pay for carrying out these duties, and a fifth said that they had received inadequate or no training.^{li} Many of our members do not receive paid time to plan interventions with teachers, and some report inadequate line management when they are told to work with groups of children with specialist needs.
- 10.8. Support staff should only administer medicines if they volunteer and, if they do so, there should be risk assessments in place and training made available. The Government should provide additional funding so schools can employ dedicated nurses.
- 10.9. School support staff make an invaluable contribution to the lives of children with physical, cognitive, language, medical and mental health needs in both mainstream and specialist school settings. They have been asked to take on increasingly complex responsibilities at a time when funding for training has been sharply reduced. GMB supports investment in services for children with additional learning needs, alongside improved pay and career development structures to recognise the expertise and dedication that the staff provide.

11. Selection

11.1. GMB opposes selection tests at eleven and all other forms of educational segregation, which tend to overwhelmingly benefit middle class children and discriminate against pupils from working class backgrounds.

11.2. GMB notes recent research by academics at Durham University, which found that:

*'Pupils attending grammar schools are stratified in terms of chronic poverty, ethnicity, language, special educational needs and even precise age within their year group. This kind of clustering of relative advantage is potentially dangerous for society. ... There is no evidence base for a policy of increasing selection... The UK government should consider phasing the existing selective schools out.'*ⁱⁱⁱ

11.3. Expanding selection and segregation and by this measure entrenching privilege is at the heart of Theresa May's vision for the UK. The 2017 Conservative election manifesto said that *'we will lift the ban on the establishment of selective schools, subject to conditions, such as allowing pupils to join at other ages as well as eleven.'*

11.4. This divisive policy was rejected by the electorate after school funding became one of the defining issues of that election. GMB notes that it is unlikely that the Conservatives will be able to obtain a majority for new legislation to enable new selective schools to be formed in the current hung Parliament. The Government may, however, make changes which do not require primary legislation, such as approving the expansions of existing selective schools at new sites (effectively creating new selective schools).

11.5. In line with Motion 327 passed at Congress 2017, GMB opposes proposals to abolish the 50 per cent cap on pupil entry in faith schools. GMB is committed to inclusive, non-sectarian education that encourages toleration, mutual respect and integration.

11.6. GMB believes that the nation should provide comprehensive and inclusive education for all, based on assessments of need – not subjective and discriminatory tests of ability. We will continue to oppose any proposals for new grammar schools and other forms of publicly funded selective schools.

12. Early years

12.1. The expansion of early years services and the creation of a national network of Sure Start (sometimes referred to as SureStart) centres was one of the greatest achievements of the last Labour Government. Comprehensive early years provision has been found to significantly improve the quality of life of both children and parents. The official evaluation of the Sure Start policy reported that:

*'Sure Start Children's Centres are well-placed to provide improved integrated services that will help support the most disadvantaged children and families and in a way that can contribute to narrowing the gap between the children of disadvantaged and more advantaged families.'*ⁱⁱⁱ

12.2. Unfortunately, early years' childcare provision faces profound challenges. Despite David Cameron's promise that the Conservatives would lead the *'most family friendly Government we've ever had'*,^{iv} figures published in Parliament suggest that more than a tenth of Sure Start centres have closed since 2010. There were 3,210 Sure Start and children's centres in England at the end of March 2017, compared to 3,615 in April 2010 – a net fall of 405.^{lv} Eight Sure Start centres opened during the course of the last Parliament – implying that 413 children's centres (the majority of which were Sure Start centres) closed in the period 2010 to 2017.^{lvi}

12.3. GMB commends the campaigns run by activists to save children's centres and community nurseries, including in Birmingham and West Midlands Region where the union is leading the community campaign against closures which, in respect of nurseries, could cost tax and ratepayers more than £2.5 million in redundancy payments and potential clawbacks on buildings^{lvii} - in addition to the unquantifiable costs that closures would impose on children, parents and carers.

12.4. In the wider economy, parents and carers are having to work longer hours to make ends meet as the value of wages continues to decline in real terms. This factor has exacerbated demand for pre-school childcare services and pushed up costs: the price of nursery care has risen by 47 per cent compared to eight years ago.^{lviii} The spiralling cost of childcare and sharp rises in demand is causing financial strain for our members who are parents and our members who work in early years provision.

12.5. Although the Government's policy of providing up to 30 hours free childcare may be welcome in principle, the funding provided to support the scheme is inadequate and it has left many local authorities facing difficult decisions when they are attempting to bridge the financial gap. The Pre-School Learning Alliance and Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years has warned that *'the introduction of 30-hours funded early years entitlement has directly threatened the business viability of nurseries in England,'* and the Conservative-controlled Treasury Select Committee has said that current funding levels are inadequate.^{lix}

13. Further and technical education

13.1. Unlike the schools budget, which has at least been protected in nominal or cash terms, the 16 to 19 education budget has suffered severe cuts in both relative and absolute terms since 2010. This has had a profound effect on our members in the sector, some of whom have not received a pay rise of any kind for several years.

13.2. The independent House of Commons Library estimates that 16-19 funding fell by 17.5 per cent in real-terms between 2010/11 and 2016/17.^{lx} The Institute for Fiscal Studies has said that:

'16–18 education spending has clearly been the relative loser from education spending changes over the last 25 years. It experienced larger cuts in the 1990s than other sectors, smaller increases during the 2000s and is currently experiencing the largest cuts.'^{lxi}

13.3. Post-19 education is beyond the scope of this special report. Colleges have however also been impacted by funding reductions due to their role as adult education providers (colleges provide educational services to twice as many adults than they do to learners aged 16 to 19^{lxii}). Excluding apprenticeships, central Government funding for adult education fell by £2 billion, or 58 per cent, in real terms between 2009/10 and 2016/17.^{lxiii} If the Government is serious about plugging the UK's skills gap, especially in the context of potential skilled labour shortages post-Brexit, then it is clear that funding cuts to colleges must be reversed.

13.4. Workers in colleges may have previously been insulated from the threats that the academisation programme represents to their terms and conditions, but further education colleges can now be converted to academy status. We will continue to work on our members' behalf as they face an uncertain transition where they work in colleges that are undergoing conversion.

13.5. The status of colleges is changing as the University Technical College (or UTC) project has blurred the traditional divisions between further and higher education. The demands on colleges will become even greater following the expected introduction of T-Levels from 2020. Colleges, and GMB's members who work in them, can play a leading role in equipping the UK with the technical skills it needs in a post-Brexit environment, but they must receive the funding that the sector desperately requires and wage rises that are commensurate with the additional responsibilities they are taking on in return.

14. Summary

14.1. GMB is the union for support staff in schools and colleges. We are improving working conditions in the sector thanks to all our members, and especially our volunteer representatives, who give up their own time to improve the lot of their colleagues.

14.2. We welcome Labour's alternative vision of a National Education Service and we will ensure that our members' voices and experiences are represented as that policy is developed.

14.3. Support staff are the hidden professionals of the education system. They make an invaluable contribution to children's development which must be recognised by the Government and employers. It is vital the SSSNB is restored and that national standards for pay grading, career progression, and training and development opportunities are introduced.

- 14.4. Employers must recognise the extent of violence in schools and take firm action, based on GMB's recommendations, to provide support staff with the protection and support they need.
- 14.5. School and colleges face their worst funding crisis in a generation, which in England has been exacerbated by the wasteful fragmentation caused by the unaccountable academy and free school programmes. Spending cuts must be reversed and adequate funding must be provided if the sector is to meet the challenges it faces.
- 14.6. GMB has done more than any other union to consistently make the case for free school meals at a national and local level. We affirm our commitment to oppose the arbitrary £7,400 free school meals cap and to continue campaigning until all children are entitled to free school meals.
- 14.7. GMB opposes unequal treatment and segregation in our school system. We reaffirm our support for inclusive educational settings and the provision of additional support for children who require it.
- 14.8. We recognise the vital contribution that early years and college workers make to the education system. Both face severe and, if action is not taken, potentially insurmountable funding challenges if they are to meet the expectations that have been set of them. The Government must act to fill the funding gap in both early years and college provision.

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