

We all know that many children do well in Sunderland's schools but Conservatives want more to succeed. Here, achievement does not match aspiration. Those who get good GCSE results are in the minority as are the deserving few who go to the best universities. Tragically many are left out altogether with high rates of persistent truancy and twice the national percentage of NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training). Conservatives want to extend achievement by taking what works well in many schools in this city and ensuring all schools offer the same opportunities. How they achieve this is up to the individual school but there are methods Conservatives believe drive up standards.

Teaching reading through synthetic phonics is a respected method of improving literacy; classes set by ability are more likely to stretch the able; a traditional emphasis on discipline will allow teachers to teach and keeping pupils in school at lunchtimes will ensure they make the best of all their time at school. As we understand schools do best when they are free, we would not compel them to use these methods but we would hold them accountable for failing to achieve as good results as those that do.

To help schools in challenging areas such as Sunderland to compete with the best, we would divert more funding towards them by reducing the share taken by costly and controlling local bureaucracy. Crucially for Sunderland we also believe in academies with real, not phoney, freedoms. Schools do not improve because they have new buildings or are jammed-packed with computers. They need independence to change what is wrong and promote what works.

Conservatives would restore the freedom to innovate with the curriculum which has recently been taken away. In particular we want to see traditional subjects such as History given prominence so children can gain a real understanding of what forces shape their country. Above all, Education in Sunderland must do more to give people the opportunity to get on in life.

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