



# 2017 policy consultation education

February 2017

**the co-operative party**



years of pioneering the future  
1917-2017

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# The 2017 policy process: education

The Co-operative Party wants to hear your opinion on the education system in the UK and how to best grow co-operative education. As you are reading this report, please consider the following questions:

- What is your biggest concern in regard to the education system in your area?
- What changes have taken place in education in your area?
- What is your local communities experience of education?
- How could education be improved in your local community?
- What is your view of co-operation and co-operative values and principles in education?
- How could local and national government support be changed to support co-operative education?
- What opportunities are there for co-operative values to be applied to and taught within Higher Education and lifelong learning sectors?

If you are an individual Co-operative Party member, local party branch or council, co-operative society, or active within the co-operative movement, we would like to hear your answers to these questions.

Alongside responding to the questions above, we want to hear your thoughts on the Co-operative Party's existing education policy, as outlined in this document (3). Below you will find:

- What is co-operative education?
- What does co-operative education look like?
- What is the Co-operative Party's existing education policy?
- Background briefing on UK education policy

Together these sections can help you as you consider the submission you would like to make to the 2017 policy process.

Education is a devolved issue, and we recognise different approaches and structures in place in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland regarding the delivery of educational services.

Where applicable, this document has taken account of the devolved national and regional governments and variations in the systems of educations that exist around the UK.

Please send your responses to the national Co-operative Party's policy team – [policy@party.coop](mailto:policy@party.coop) – **before June 30th.**

All submissions will be considered by the Policy Subcommittee of the National Executive Committee, and a report outlining their responses to each submission will be published in August 2017.

This report will form the basis of policy discussions at the Party's Annual Conference in October, which will in turn refresh and renew the Party's education policy.

## What is co-operative education?

Children get the best education when schools, parents and communities work together and when they feel their views are taken into account.

This approach is at the heart of co-operative education; supporting children to feel valued and to take responsibility for themselves and their communities.

In the last ten years, a growing number of Co-operative schools and places of education in England have offered this alternative vision of learning. It is a vision of learning founded on the co-operative values and principles.

Co-op schools are state-maintained primary, secondary and special schools which have:

- A co-operative governance structure including a multi-stakeholder membership model giving a voice to parents, staff, student and the local community.
- A co-operative ethos – driven by the co-operative values and principles

- Adopted a co-operative dimension to the curriculum and use teaching and learning methodologies which emphasise team goals, individual accountability, equal participation and co-construction.
- A commitment to engagement with and accountability to their wider communities.

There are now hundreds of primary and secondary co-operative schools.

The vast majority are foundation trust schools, with co-operative values – self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity – written into the constitutions of the charitable trusts that own their land and assets.

Some trusts control only one school, but more include a secondary and a group of feeder primaries, or a group of local primaries that want to work together, such as the [Coastal Alliance](#) foundation trust in Kent, formed earlier this year.

A unique feature of co-operative education is the involvement of all stakeholders within the governance of the school or learning institution. This means that parents, teachers, pupils and the wider community have a role in the governance of their school or place of education.

The application of co-operative values and principles within education has led to activity within a range of areas, as discussed below.

The values, principles and models of co-operation should also be included in the curricula of the UK's education systems. This can instill the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity within education, and show pupils and students that another way of doing business is possible.

## Where did co-operative schools come from?

A small network of schools which adopted Business and Enterprise as a specialism – sponsored by the Co-operative Group – was formed around 2004.

The experience of embedding co-operative values across the school was very positive and led to significant improvements. The next step was to develop a governance model which would enshrine the commitment to operating in accordance with the co-operative values for the long term (and independently of the influence of individual school leaders).

The first co-operative governance model for schools was a variation on the foundation trust model introduced by the 2006 Education and Inspections Act. External partners were chosen to reflect the co-operative ethos and students, staff, parents and members of the local community could become members of the school co-operative with representation on the Trust board.

Co-operative Trusts also provided an excellent structure for schools wishing to work more closely together in local collaborations.

## How do they fit into the national education landscape?

Governance models for co-operative have evolved as the landscape has changed. In 2010 the first co-operative 'converter' academies were established in England.

Subsequently co-operative umbrella and multi-academy trust models have been developed. These have retained two core features:

- A constitutional commitment to operate in accordance with the global co-operative values and principles
- A system of membership safeguarding the right to stakeholder voice in governance.

The Co-operative Group is the sponsor of a small number of academies, as is the Schools Co-operative Society. Whilst the sponsored status limits the degree of stakeholder accountability which is possible, these schools share the co-operative values-driven ethos.

## How many are there and how do they work together?

Around 800 schools have converted to either co-operative trust or co-operative academy status.

The number currently with this status is around 650 as some former co-operative schools have been forced into non-co-operative academy chains and others have changed status for other reasons.

All co-operative schools are eligible for membership of the Schools Co-operative Society (SCS), a secondary co-operative owned and run by its member schools.

The Co-operative College operates a consultancy service to help schools through the conversion process. It provides a range of training and curriculum resources, along with a quality standard – the Co-operative Identity Mark – to support schools in embedding the co-operative values. The College has recently launched a school improvement programme for co-operative schools, in partnership with Edison Learning.

## What opportunities does the model offer?

Given the current direction of travel in England (MATs, Grammar schools etc) the co-operative model is the only governance structure which retains a degree of local democratic accountability available to schools that leave their local authority family. As financial constraints further limit the role of LAs continues, and the RSCs (Regional Schools Commissioners) continue the pressure on schools to academies, co-operative schools remain one way of ensuring that local communities have a say in the education that is provided for their young people. Where they work well this can be a powerful relationship and the young people who are educated by them will be influenced to become active, values-driven citizens.

# What does co-operative education look like?

## University of Edinburgh – Economic Democracy: The Co-operative Alternative

The University of Edinburgh, in partnership with the University of St Andrews, have created an online course focused on the co-operative economy alternative. The central questions of the course are:

What would happen if workers ran their own firms?

Would worker-managed firms take the same decisions as their capitalist counterparts?

Could such an economy be efficient?

What policies could be deployed to promote a cooperative sector?

The outline for the course explains 'There is widespread interest around the world in cooperatives as an alternative to the capitalist corporation, particularly since the financial crash of 2008. Economics and other social sciences can focus and sharpen the debate on cooperatives. Having taken the course, students will be better placed to participate in public discussion on cooperatives, or to join a cooperative or even start a new one'

## Reddish Vale Co-operative Trust

Reddish Vale Technology College was the first school in England to become a co-operative Trust school, with the Reddish Vale Co-operative Trust established in March 2008.

Reddish Vale is a large secondary school, with 1,320 learners. The school's most recent Ofsted Report in 2007 described the school as good with some aspects, such as provision for care, guidance and support, outstanding.

The Co-operative Trust has given the school a solid platform on which to build partnerships and continue to develop to meet the changing needs of our local communities. The 'My Place' programme, for example, has offered young people hands-on opportunities to develop and manage a youth co-operative. They have come together through membership of the Trust to bid to deliver sport, leisure,

information, advice and guidance, and a safe place to be in the heart of their community. Their bid “Our Space” has a co-operative enterprise – run by young people for young people – as its centrepiece.

The Trust has offered not only the school but a wide range of partners and stakeholders a way in which to continue to drive up standards and create a transformational platform to address wider issues of education, training, employability and regeneration.

Sustainability is provided through the membership and co-ownership of the physical environment. The school's community has a continual throughput of potential new members and a strong connection within the community to bring stakeholder groups together at a grassroots level. Drawing on this they are able to grow support and capacity in and across the community for regeneration and transformation.

## Millmead Community Mutual

Sure Start Millmead was established as a Community Mutual in April 2005. The programme started in 2001 and developed a model that values the views of parents and children. Parents were included in all aspects of the programme, from being on interview panels for the recruitment of the large team, to being members of the Management Board and being active on the Parent Focus Group.

There are many examples of how the Community Mutual has helped local residents. These include the provision of outreach home visits by community workers where parents are befriended and supported to access the many services available in the new purpose-built Children's Centre. Childcare is provided free of charge to parents attending programmes in the centre. The Community Café provides a focus for local parents and children to get together on an informal basis to support each other and it also helps develop a sense of community in the area.

Some local parents were recruited to work as community workers, which not only helped with job opportunities in an area of North Kent with very high unemployment rates but also enabled the establishment of vital links into the county. Over time, the programme considered the models of governance available. It was important to the programme to have a model that ensured the continued involvement of parents in the planning, delivery and evaluation of services. It was agreed that they would incorporate as a Community Mutual, as this model would enable the continued engagement of parents and the building-up of trust in a community that had a history of being “atomistic” and “on the edge”.

The programme emphasised the importance of working with parents and children. Having local parents as part of the integrated team, they were able to use their knowledge and experience of the area to tailor the services that were needed in the community. They were also able to develop a model of working where we expected change and improvements in local service delivery and outcomes for children and families.

The Community Mutual model has made a difference as it enables: A local programme to operate in ways that made sense and is meaningful to local residents. A greater emphasis on adult education programmes for parents who lack self-esteem and self-confidence. The continued delivery of better services in the local community. New models of working where staff, parents and children all work together to improve outcomes for children and families. The provision of tailored services for parents experiencing domestic violence, mental health problems and other difficulties. Membership of the Community Mutual leads to cost reductions in activities such as the summer family trip, use of the Community café and other events.

The Community Mutual has given Millmead residents ownership and involvement in the centre. It has provided a sceptical community that lacked confidence in traditional statutory service provision a new model of engagement that works and has helped to improve outcomes for children and families.

## The Co-operative Academies Trust

The Co-operative Academies Trust is made up of eight academy schools in the North of England, each of which is sponsored by The Co-operative Group.

The Co-operative Group is a member-owned business with stores and branches across the UK. Its commitment to education goes back over 150 years. They work with primary and secondary schools, and are keen to expand their network of academies in further locations in Greater Manchester, Cheshire and West Yorkshire.

Co-operative Academies are schools that want to access the additional freedoms and funding that are available in the academy model but also build in important aspects such as a voice for key stakeholder groups. The Co-operative Values and Principles form a key part of the shared vision outlined by the Department for Education (DfE) for successful Academies.

Schools who meet the criteria for conversion to academy status are able to select the recently revised and approve Co-operative Academy company articles. Many schools are choosing to form larger groups as Multi-Academy Trusts where the Co-operative Principle of autonomy and Values of equality and democracy really come in to their own.

# What is the Co-operative Party's existing education policy?

## Co-operative schools

The Co-operative Party is pleased to see that there are now over 800 co-operative schools, 139 of them secondaries.

Moving to a co-operative model provides a framework in which everybody with a stake in the school's success. Parents, teachers and support staff, local community organisations and pupils have the opportunity to be involved in running it.

To an increasing number of schools, it provides a strong mutual 'root' and a clear mechanism for involving parents more effectively in their children's education.

The co-operative model also ensures that the school becomes more accountable. The structure is designed to ensure that those in positions of responsibility will have to remain sensitive to the needs, views and aspirations of the different groups of interested people, and that the respective views of stakeholders can be balanced in an appropriate way to suit the needs of the organisation.

There is significant potential for co-operative trust schools to provide an important contribution to the overall diversity of state education. A national network of co-operative trusts has developed, actively supported by and engaging with the huge and diverse co-operative and mutual sector. UK Government should

- Work with the Schools Co-operative Society and Co-operative College to further develop a national support mechanism for co-operative trust schools, owned and controlled by the existing co-operative trust schools.

Existing charity law should also be reviewed to ensure that the co-operative trust model is able to develop in as democratic and participative a manner as possible, as well as enabling schools to benefit from international associations. To enable this, existing legislation should be amended so that

- All mainstream state funded schools and Further Education Colleges, whether community, trust, faith-based schools or academies can establish co-operative governance structures, should they wish to do so.
- Parent and teacher associations are mandatory in all mainstream schools, and each should have responsibility for appointing at least one school governor.

- Every school and Further Education College should also be required to have an elected body for students, which will play an important role in setting its ethos and overall direction.

Co-operative trusts have not only transformed the relationships of schools with parents, staff, pupils and other stakeholders, but they have also formed a framework for co-operation between a number of different schools in the same area. They could also provide a more integrated service encouraging collaborative working across different providers.

One solution to this would be the creation of social co-operatives, which could provide a range of services in their appropriate communities, outside of the existing timetabled programme.

It is important to note that support is given to governors of the Co-operative Schools to ensure that they are able to articulate and guard the principles of co-operation. This will ensure the long term health of the schools and increase the number of co-operators within our movement.

## Co-operation on the curriculum

Reports from OFSTED and the results of pupils have shown the benefits of using co-operative values as a framework to deliver the breadth of curriculum areas and personal development undertaken in schools. Co-operative values and skills can empower young people as active citizens, and embed civil society skills. These should be:

- Embedded in the curriculum across early years, primary and secondary education.

It is also important to ensure that young people develop an understanding of the depth and breadth of the Co-operative Movement, both in the UK and across the world. As it stands, a very small proportion of young people leave school with an understanding of co-operatives and mutuals, as opposed to other economic models. Governments should:

- Ensure that knowledge of co-operative practice and principles are fully incorporated into the national curricula for economics, enterprise, geography and citizenship, and all other subjects where appropriate.

## Sure Start

Sure Start and Flying Start Children's Centres are one of Labour's finest achievements, and remain at the forefront of endeavours to transform the way services are delivered for young children and their families. We can take much pride in the fact that there are over 3,000 centres still up and running in England, and tens of thousands of families benefiting from Flying Start in Wales. Though in England cuts to Local Authority budgets have seen the range and number of services provided by Sure Start in some areas dramatically reduced.

Giving communities a sense of ownership and involvement over Sure Start services can improve the services and be empowering for the parents who use them play a significant role in either addressing 'us and them' attitudes or simple alienation from authority. We welcome the way in which this has been addressed through the development of a 'community mutual' Sure Start centre at Millmead in Kent.

Through involving local residents in its membership structures, the centre has been able to design services around the needs of its users, as well as developing increased satisfaction, support and loyalty. Community ownership can help remove barriers and develop trust, so that the organisation is accessible to people who otherwise would be less likely to use the services.

The UK and devolved Governments should recognise the advantages of the 'community mutual' model for Sure Start, and work to ensure the development of the model, both in the provision of any new centres and the conversion of existing ones. In particular, they should encourage local authorities to consider converting existing Sure Start/Flying Start centres to the 'community mutual' model, as well as using it as a model for the provision of new services :

## Local government

Local authorities have a role in planning school places, fair funding, managing admissions and the care of excluded and vulnerable children and providing the additional support to schools. Education should be not-for-profit and not part of a profit-making market system. Our children and their education is too important to be left to the market. This should also apply to the ever increasing provision of free schools and chain academies in England.

It is important to have collaboration amongst schools and the support services to be able to develop and raise the standards of teaching and build an inclusive framework for education to be delivered. The Schools Co-operative Society aims to provide networking amongst cooperative schools and to support schools.

Networking and working together is the key to providing a fully comprehensive education with a broad range of subjects both vocational and academic with a broad range of assessments and qualifications. As such:

- All exam boards should be publicly owned or not-for-profit with a strong public service ethos.

To making sure that parents are encouraged and supported to play a greater role in their children's' education, schools should be encouraged and funded to

- Provide numeracy, literacy and IT for parents. Parents can then support their children and take part in running the school.

To advance the growth of co-operative activity in the education system, local authorities can:

- Learn from successful co-operative cluster arrangements which see schools working together to procure back office services and resources including SEN and school improvement support.

## Co-operative education in Wales

The Welsh Co-operative Party included commitments to co-operative education within our 2016 Co-operative Agenda for Wales:

- Work with schools, experts such as Dynamix, the Co-operative College, Young Co-operatives and the Welsh co-operative sector to develop resources for schools to teach Welsh young people about the co-operative movement and co-operative businesses.
- Work with the Co-operative Council Network and others such as ProMo Cymru to develop co-operative youth services. It is crucial that young people have a voice in the provision of youth services in their area and that they feel a sense of ownership.
- Councils can build on the success of the 'Co-operative Trust' school model in England, but adapt it within the LEA context. This could include strengthening governance to make schools more accountable to their communities or setting up elected student bodies.

## Co-operative Education in Scotland

The Co-operative Agenda for Scotland 2016 - the Scottish Co-operative Party's agenda for the 2016 Holyrood elections – included commitments to the co-operative educations:

- We will ensure that education and training around the co-operative model is available at all levels from school to university, building on the work of Co-operative Education Trust Scotland, and that all economic development agencies are open to developing co-operatives and have the practical knowledge and resources to do so.
- We believe that there is a very strong case for a co-operative approach to education. This approach seeks to include pupils, students, parents and carers, teachers and other staff in the organisation of the learning experience.
- We believe that the education system in Scotland should introduce pupils to the cooperative model, and believe that it should be taught at all levels from primary school up to postgraduate level at university. We also believe that the Scottish Government should provide support for the production and promotion of materials which will facilitate the teaching about co-operatives.

# Background briefing on UK education policy

Education in the UK is devolved to each of the four nations of the United Kingdom. The English education system is overseen by the UK government, whilst the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish governments are responsible for their respective education systems. All children in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland between the ages of 5 and 16 are entitled to a free place at a state school.

Each nation has a distinct education system, reflecting different historical developments and contemporary preferences. The primary variations in the national education systems are the balance between state-funded schools and private fee-paying schools, between schools 'maintained' and funded by a local education authority and those 'non-maintained' schools independent of their LEA, and the extent to which their systems are either comprehensive or selective.

Adding further variation to the education systems across the UK has been the waves of reform brought forward by governments since World War Two. State-funded education was arranged under the tripartite system from 1944 to the 1970s. This system allocated pupils to either a grammar school, secondary technical school or a secondary modern school based on their performance at the 11-plus examination.

In 1965 Anthony Crosland, then Secretary of State for Education, issued 'Circular 10/65' requesting that Local Education Authorities (LEAs) begin converting all secondary schools into a comprehensive system. This meant pupils were allocated a school place based not on academic achievement but on geography, removing competition between schools and ensuring pupils of all abilities and socio-economic background were mixed throughout their education.

By 1975 all but ten of the 151 LEAs in England, Scotland and Wales had abandoned the 11+ in favour of the new comprehensive system, which has remained the primary form of education in England, Scotland and Wales. However, since the late 1980s and 1990s, the distinction between comprehensive 'maintained' schools and independent, fee-paying schools has become blurred by the introduction

of academies and free schools. Whilst funded by the government, these new schools are removed from LEA control, accountable directly to the Department for Education, can set their own curriculum and term times, and can seek corporate sponsorship.

Importantly, academies act as their own admissions authority, meaning they can set their own over-subscription criteria in line with the Schools Admissions Code in agreement with the Department for Education. This has been criticised as increasing competition between schools and undermining the comprehensive system. Free schools, introduced by the Coalition government, have furthered competition between schools and the ability of parents to remove their child from the comprehensive system.

From the late 1970s, grammar schools – state-funded schools who select all or virtually all their pupils based on ability – were a small section of England’s education system. In November 2016, there were 163 grammar schools with a total of 167,000 pupils, down from a peak of 1,300 schools in the mid-1960s. Ten LEAs of the 151 in England had resisted the shift to a comprehensive system in the 1960s and 70s and retained wholly selective system with grammar schools and ‘secondary modern’ schools for those pupils who did not pass their 11+.

However, grammar schools remained a cause close to the Tory heart. When selected to be the new Conservative leader and Prime Minister, Theresa May’s announced she would remove the 1998 ban on new Grammar schools. This was followed up with a commitment to invest £240m in the expansion of English grammar schools by Phillip Hammond, Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The education systems across England, Scotland and Wales is highly diverse and due to become even more so with the growth of selective grammar schools over the coming years. School types are summarised on the next page.

# Schools types

School Type	Who owns the assets?	School operations	Funding	Staff	Support services	National curriculum	Admission authority
Academies	The academy trust on a lease from LEA	Governing body	DfE	Employed by governing body	Head teacher and governing body	Do not have to follow	Academy Trust*
City Technology Colleges	A company	Agreement between company and Department for Education (DfE)	DfE and commercial sponsor	Employed by governing body	Governing body	Follows with emphasis on technology	Governing body
Community schools	The LEA	Governing body	LEA	Employed by LEA	Provided by LEA	Follows	LEA*
Foundation/ Trust Schools	The governing body	Governing body	LEA	Employed by governing body	Governing body	Follows	Governing body*
Free Schools	Owned by governing body	Governing body	DfE	Employed by governing body	Head teacher and governing body	Do not have to follow	Free school
Independent Schools	The governing body	Governing body	Fees and charitable trust funds	Head teacher with the backing of the governing body	Head teacher and governing body	Do not have to follow	Governing body
Voluntary Aided Schools	A charity (often a religious organisation)	Governing body	Shared by LEA, governing body and charity	Employed by governing body	Provided by LEA	Follows (but can choose focus in religious studies)	Governing body*
Voluntary Controlled Schools	A charity	Governing body	LEA	Employed by LEA	Provided by LEA	Follows	LEA*

\* Adhere to the School Admissions Code issued under Section 84 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

# politics for people

65 St John Street, London EC1M 4AN

 [www.party.coop](http://www.party.coop)

 02073674150

 [policy@party.coop](mailto:policy@party.coop)

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