



## **Independent Schools Council – Manifesto 2017**

### Executive summary

Independent Schools Council (ISC) schools' excellence stems from our sector's independence from central government and local authorities, which enables us to be innovative and experimental, in turn better meeting the needs of pupils and helping raise educational standards across the country.

Pupil welfare comes first in ISC schools. We provide first-class learning environments in which student wellbeing and safeguarding are top priorities.

The role our schools play in the UK's diverse educational landscape should not be underestimated. Our schools fund many bursaries for children from the poorest families. We offer choice to parents. We have a rich history of academic excellence as well as successfully nurturing sporting, creative and artistic talent. Many of our schools have a specialism less commonly found in the state sector, such as boarding, music and choir schools, schools for very able children and those for children with special needs.

In the spirit of true partnership, we aim to work with all political parties so our schools can continue to widen access and social mobility, to support our schools' hugely successful joint initiatives with state schools, to enhance the international reputation of British education, and ultimately to help children thrive.

Because we believe independence is our key strength we ask that:

- Our schools are encouraged to operate independently in the knowledge this is an integral part of the national education system.
- All political parties recognise the contribution that ISC schools make to the UK economy and society, and do not propose measures which will inhibit our excellence or ability to extend the work we do in partnership with state schools.

Because we support families from all walks of life we ask that:

- Up to 10,000 new school places a year are created in ISC schools for children from lower income families. These will be co-funded by independent schools and the government, which would provide only the allocated state funding per child.
- The next government introduces the means by which parents can choose the school in which their state-allocated funding is spent.

Because we work in partnership with state schools to help all pupils thrive we ask that:

- All political parties work with the independent sector, and acknowledge the scope and value of hugely beneficial initiatives that exist between ISC and state schools. At present, 88% of ISC schools work in partnership with a state school, with 10,000 different joint initiatives taking place.
- Best practice and current activity is increasingly shared to encourage greater participation.

Because we help UK education to be seen as an international gold standard we ask that:

- ISC schools are recognised as high quality providers and the regulations affecting international pupils seeking education at an ISC school in the UK be relaxed, including when negotiating new arrangements for European students post-Brexit.
- International students at UK schools be taken out of net migration targets.

Because we champion improvements in pupil assessment and teacher training we ask that:

- There should be no further significant or sudden reforms to public exams until the current changes and new grading system have bedded in.
- Improving the quality of paper setting, examiner training and exam marking should remain priorities to ensure complete confidence in the new exams.
- Barriers to independent schools taking a lead in teacher training schemes are removed.

## **About ISC**

There are over 1,300 independent schools represented by the Independent Schools Council (ISC), educating over 500,000 pupils or 5% of the total school population.