

What the general election manifestos mean for the UK English language teaching sector



June 2024

English UK's summary

The Conservatives, Labour, the Liberal Democrats, and the Green Party have all now published their general election manifestos, as have others, including Plaid Cymru, the Scottish National Party and Reform.

At the time of releasing our summary, the DUP had not yet published a manifesto ([once published, it will be available here](#)).

We could not find anything relevant to include in our summary in the Sinn Féin manifesto ([key Sinn Fein policies analysed by the BBC found here](#)).

For our summary, we have only selected the policy areas that are most interesting to the UK ELT sector. We have directly quoted each excerpt, with minor grammatical changes for clarity.

1. Policy area: Business

1.1 SMEs

Conservative & Green (nothing relevant for inclusion)

Labour

- Will retain a permanent full expensing system for capital investment and the annual investment allowance for small businesses...and ... give firms greater clarity on what qualifies for allowances to improve business investment decisions.
- Reform of the British Business Bank, including a stronger mandate to support growth in the regions and nations... make it easier for small and medium-sized enterprises to access capital.
- Will ensure small businesses and the self-employed are paid on time.
- We will consult fully with businesses, workers, and civil society on how to put our plans into practice before legislation is passed. This will include

banning exploitative zero-hours contracts; ending fire and rehire; and introducing basic rights from day one to parental leave, sick pay, and protection from unfair dismissal.

Liberal Democrats:

- Ensuring that all information small and medium-sized enterprises need on trade is readily available from a single point of contact, with tailored support.

Plaid Cymru

- Reverse the reductions in support to small businesses ... and amend the multiplier to better support high street business, such as retail and hospitality.
- We will establish a National Development Agency for Wales and reform the Development Bank of Wales.

Reform

- Free over 1.2 million small and medium-sized businesses from Corporation Tax. Lift the minimum profit threshold to £100k. Reduce the main Corporation Tax Rate from 25% to 20%, then to 15% from Year 3.

SNP (nothing relevant for inclusion)

1.2 Business rates

Conservative & Green (nothing relevant for inclusion)

Labour

- In England, Labour will replace the business rates system, so we can raise the same revenue but in a fairer way. This new system will level the playing field between the high street and online giants, better incentivise investment, tackle empty properties and support entrepreneurship.

Plaid Cymru

- We support the reform in Wales of Non-Domestic Rates, also known as Business Rates, in order to establish a system which better supports our small businesses.

Reform

- Abolish Business Rates for high street-based SMEs.

SNP (nothing relevant for inclusion)

1.3 Upskilling UK workers

Conservative

- We will deliver the Lifelong Learning Entitlement, giving adults support to train, retrain and upskill flexibly throughout their working lives.

Green (nothing relevant for inclusion)

Labour

- Labour will bring joined-up thinking, ensuring that migration to address skills shortages triggers a plan to upskill workers and improve working conditions in the UK.
- We will establish Skills England to bring together business, training providers and unions with national and local government to ensure we have the highly trained workforce needed. Skills England will work with the Migration Advisory Committee.

Plaid Cymru

- Would offer a grant of £5,000 to the Personal Learning Accounts of every individual over 25 to train or retrain, with added loans to cover more expensive courses and maintenance costs.

Reform

- Abolish Business Rates for high street-based SMEs.

SNP (nothing relevant for inclusion)

2. Policy area: International trade and students

2.1 International trade

Conservative

- Confident in spreading British values around the world, publishing a new Soft Power Strategy to support the role of our embassies and the British Council overseas. We will ... champion English learning around the globe.

Green (nothing relevant for inclusion)

Labour

- We will improve guidance and remove barriers to exporting for small businesses.
- UK trade negotiators will work with devolved governments to promote our fantastic businesses and services internationally.

- We will use our diplomatic network to attract foreign direct investment into the UK, expand markets for British exporters, and shape emerging regulatory frameworks. Britain is a proud trading nation and flourishing international business is a vital part of our plan for growth. Labour will seek targeted trade agreements aligned with our industrial strategy and economic strengths, to bring prosperity to communities across England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. We will publish a trade strategy and use every lever available to get UK business the access it needs to international markets.
- We will work across government to bring leading creative and cultural institutions together to increase the UK's international clout.

Liberal Democrats

- Make it a clear objective of trade ministers to boost trade by small British businesses.

Plaid Cymru, Reform & SNP (nothing relevant for inclusion)

2.3 International students

Conservative

- We will increase all visa fees and remove the student discount to the Immigration Health Surcharge to raise more money for public services. We will continue to attract the brightest and best students to study in our world-class institutions.

Green & Labour (nothing relevant for inclusion)

Liberal Democrats:

- Returning to the Erasmus Plus programme as an associated country.
- Reporting international student flows separately to estimates of long-term migration.
- Expand opportunities for young people to study, teach and volunteer abroad by returning to the Erasmus Plus programme.

Plaid Cymru:

- We support the Migration Advisory Committees' recommendation that the graduate route visa be retained.

Reform

- Introduce new visa rules for international students that bar dependents. Only international students with essential skills can remain in the UK. Close down fake courses and immigration schemes that abuse the rules.

SNP (nothing relevant for inclusion)

2.4 Youth Mobility Scheme

Conservative, Green & Labour (nothing relevant for inclusion)

Liberal Democrats

- Expand the Youth Mobility Scheme by negotiating with the EU to extend it on a reciprocal basis, increasing the age limit to 35, abolishing fees for these visas and extending to three years.

Plaid Cymru & Reform (nothing relevant for inclusion)

SNP

- Agree an EU-wide youth mobility scheme. Despite the EU proposing a post-Brexit mobility scheme for young people, both the Tories and Labour rejected it within hours. The UK Government must stop failing young people and agree a scheme so that young people can benefit from the opportunities that living, working and studying in the EU can bring.

3. Policy area: Immigration

3.1 General migration

Conservative

- Introduce a legal cap on migration to guarantee numbers fall every year
- Raise the Skilled Worker threshold and Family income requirement with inflation automatically to make sure they don't undercut UK workers.
- Will require migrants to undergo a health check and increase their Immigration Health Surcharge/requiring them to buy health insurance if they are likely to be a burden on the NHS.

Green

- An end to the hostile environment and minimum income requirements for spouses of those holding work visas.

Labour

- Will reduce net migration.

Liberal Democrats

- Transfer policymaking over work visas and overseas students out of the Home Office and into other departments.

Plaid Cymru

- Wales should have greater powers over migration—including the ability to determine our own Shortage Occupation List and granting the Welsh Government the ability to manage its own visa schemes.

Reform

- Freeze non-essential immigration.

SNP

- Mitigate the harm of Brexit on productivity by reviewing immigration rules and expanding shortage occupation lists, so businesses have access to the workforce they need.

3.2 Worker migration

Conservatives & Green (nothing relevant for inclusion)

Labour

- We will strengthen the Migration Advisory Committee, and establish a framework for joint working with skills bodies across the UK, the Industrial Strategy Council and the Department for Work and Pensions.
- Reform the points-based immigration system so that it is fair and properly managed, with appropriate restrictions on visas, and by linking immigration and skills policy.

Liberal Democrats

- Fix the work visa system and expand the Youth Mobility Scheme
- More flexible merit-based system for work visas, with the relevant department working with employers in each sector to address specific needs as part of a long-term workforce strategy that also focuses on education and training to address skills gaps from within the UK.
- Extend the participation of devolved administrations in the development of the evidence base for UK-wide policy on work permits and student visas, helping ensure rules are sensitive to the skills needs of every corner of the UK and every sector of the economy

Plaid Cymru (nothing relevant for inclusion)

Reform:

- The National Insurance rate for foreign workers will be raised to 20%. This would incentivize businesses to employ British citizens, whose rate would stay at 13.8%.

SNP (nothing relevant for inclusion)

3.3 The EU

Conservatives (nothing relevant for inclusion)

Green

- will work for the UK to...re-join the EU as soon as the political conditions are right.

Labour

- Britain will stay outside the EU. We will reset the relationship. There will be no return to the single market, the customs union, or freedom of movement. Will work to improve the UK's trade and investment relationship with the EU.

Liberal Democrats

- ...four-stage roadmap to reset the relationship

Plaid Cymru

- The UK should re-enter the European Single Market and Customs Union at the earliest opportunity.

Reform

- Prepare for renegotiations on the EU trade and C=cooperation agreement.

SNP

- Rejoin the EU, reverse the damage of Brexit and re-enter the single market, restoring free movement for EU citizens.

4. Policy area: Other

4.1 Tourism

Conservatives, Green & Labour (nothing relevant for inclusion)

Liberal Democrats

- Upgrade status with a dedicated Minister of State for Tourism and Hospitality.

Plaid Cymru (nothing relevant for inclusion)

Reform

- Abolish the VAT Tourist Tax. The government has cost our economy over £10 billion when they stopped the VAT refund scheme for tourist shopping. This also deterred up to 2 million tourists.

SNP (nothing relevant for inclusion)

4.2 Private schools

Conservative & Green (nothing relevant for inclusion)

Labour

- will end the VAT exemption and business rates relief for private schools to invest in our state schools.

Liberal Democrats, Plaid Cymru, Reform & SNP (nothing relevant for inclusion)

4.3 Coastal communities

Conservative

- Launch a Seaside Heritage Fund to support enhancements to our seaside heritage and preserve and restore our coastal assets.

Green, Labour, Liberal Democrats, Plaid Cymru, Reform & SNP (nothing relevant for inclusion)