

2009

Political Party Manifesto  
Local Elections

AONTAS

The National Adult Learning  
Organisation

Second Floor, 83 – 87 Main Street,  
Ranelagh, Dublin 6

01 4068220

[www.aontas.com](http://www.aontas.com)

## INTRODUCTION

The Local Elections will be held on Friday, 5<sup>th</sup> June 2009. This document contains the policies in relation to lifelong learning and education included in the Local manifestos of the five main political parties, Fianna Fail, Fine Gael, Labour Party, Green Party and Sinn Fein.

## FIANNA FAIL

According to the Fianna Fail Local Election Manifesto 2009, a vote for a Fianna Fail candidate promises / notes the following in relation to lifelong learning and education:

- Under structural reforms Fianna Fail promise to ensure chairs of each local authority's Strategic Policy Committees are elected for the full term of the council to ensure continuity of policy over the full term of a Council.
- Fianna Fail want each local authority immediately prepares a strategy for how it can, through its procedures and programmes, assist in the retention and creation of employment.
- Fianna Fail promise to ensure best value and return for our investment in training programmes in each region, reflecting the skills need of local and growing enterprises
- Fianna Fail promise to continue supporting Community Employment Schemes as an essential activation measure that also provides a significant benefit to local communities.
- Fianna Fail promise to provide places in local authorities for participants on the new Work Experience Scheme to ensure that each town, city or county area can benefit from the skills of participants as they gain valuable work experience.
- Fianna Fail promise to undertake an early evaluation of the pilot training programme aimed at sustaining vulnerable employment and if evaluation is positive organise expansion across the country.
- Fianna Fail promise to continue to support of the development of public libraries noting that Libraries have the potential to become the focus of information provision for jobseekers, employers, users of public services, tourists and many others

Click [here](#) to download a copy of the Fianna Fail Local Election Manifesto

## FINE GAEL

According to the Fine Gael Local Election Manifesto 2009, a vote for a Fine Gael candidate promises / notes the following in relation to lifelong learning and education:

- Under the heading 'A Fairer Ireland' Fine Gael's policy on third level education rules out the return of third level fees. In order to make up the funding gap that exists in third level, graduates should contribute to the cost of their courses after they graduate for a set period of time. When fully up and running this system will raise up to €500m per annum – which they promise will be used directly to make our third level sector better and stronger. Fine Gael believe that this graduate contribution will enable to abolish registration fees.
- Oppose the re-introduction of third level fees (and existing registration fees): Fine Gael see fees (and existing registration fees) as a barrier to participation at third level. They believe that the funding gap for third level sector cannot be met from general taxation.
- Develop a new graduate contribution scheme: Fine Gael have proposed the idea that graduates should pay through a system of deferred contribution after they graduate. Once graduates begin to gain the economic benefit from their education, they should pay up to 30% of the cost of their degree programme. The contribution will be collected through the PRSI system. The funds raised should be ring-fenced for the reform of the third level sector into a Third Level Change Budget. The institutions can then compete for some of the Third Level Change Budget for reform purposes.
- Establish an integrated qualifications and quality assurance body: It would bring together the agencies currently involved in awarding qualifications and measuring quality in the sector. This body would have overall responsibility for value of course content, teaching performance and research output within every institution across the country. Linked to quality assessment is the requirement to introduce an effective mentoring system.
- Review the current maintenance grant system: to ensure that there is reasonable support available for those who want to go back to College.

- Promote third level specialisation and expertise: Ireland has seven Universities and 14 Institutes of Technology in the Country. It is Fine Gael's view that each third level institution should examine where its strengths lie, what area of expertise it has the most potential to succeed in and produce a plan outlining its intentions and strategic vision for this area of education provision. An overarching umbrella University or federation for the entire Institute of Technology sector should be introduced. In devising new course programmes, an industry and labour markets needs survey should be a mandatory pre-requisite.
- Primary Pupil Database: Fine Gale promise to prioritise the development of a Primary Pupil Database to track the progress of all children through the primary school system throughout the country on to second level education, helping to tackle issues such as absenteeism, special needs requirements and providing a means of assessing the various bodies involved in coordinating and delivering support services to schools.

Click [here](#) download a copy of the Fine Gael Local Election Manifesto

### LABOUR PARTY

According to the Labour Party Local Election Manifesto 2009, a vote for a Labour Party candidate promises / notes the following in relation to lifelong learning and education:

- Explore how libraries can be used as local resource centres for people who are unemployed, and looking for information on local jobs, training and CV or job-seeking advice.
- Help mobilise VECs to provide retraining opportunities for those who have lost their jobs. Labour promise to explore how further education institutions can best respond to the needs of their local communities through, for example:
  - a local analysis of the skills needs of people signing onto the live register
  - Extended night-time and weekend opening hours
- Extend the remit of County Development Boards to act as local jobs and training taskforces. This local taskforce would bring all local education and training providers, local chambers of commerce and local FAS offices together to coordinate an urgent response to local unemployment.
- Through libraries, and the links between local authorities and Vocational Educational Committees, local government has played an important role in the provision of

education in the community and the promotion of Life Long Learning. Labour promise to expand the role of local government in education, as it is the key to building a sustainable economy and enabling people of all ages to reach their full potential.

- Propose the establishment of Local Education Forums to facilitate discussion between local representatives, school boards, parents and council management, and to plan effectively for the needs of schools in the area.
- Work to achieve the goals of Labour's Right to Read campaign.
- Advocate that local authorities provide homework clubs, run by Community Development Workers.
- Ensure future social housing takes account of children's need to have a quiet space to do their homework.
- Encourage literacy among young parents with the promotion of 'Baby Books Bundle' through the local library service.
- Extend library opening hours and outreach services.
- Introduce more 'Family Learning Through Football' schemes, which encourage positive parenting and family literacy.
- A greater roll-out of schemes like Dublin City Council's 'Beano Comic Initiative'.
- Facilitate the provision of outreach centres that link up to third level institutions, and facilitate distance or online learning, where available.
- Work with VECs and Institutes of Technology to provide training opportunities for local authority employees, to help equip them for their roles in public service delivery.
- Facilitate libraries to become community resource centres for the arts and education, as well as hubs for those seeking localised advice on job-seeking and employment opportunities.

- Labour proposes establishing a Senior Citizen Forum in every Local Authority, Electoral Area, which would give our seniors the opportunity to give their views on matters that affect them. For example:
  - Better public transport facilities.
  - Options for socialising locally, such as active retirement clubs.
  - Personal security.

**At national level, Labour wants to:**

- Mobilise our education and training system to meet the re-training needs of the unemployed. This includes:
  - Introducing a new work and training initiative called 'Earn and Learn', which would enable people to work two or three days a week, and be paid to train for the remaining days.
  - A Graduate and Apprentice Job Placement Scheme, where new graduates and trainees can receive the equivalent of a Jobseeker's payment while undertaking an internship.
  - Reducing the waiting period for eligibility for Back to Education Allowance and Back to Work Enterprise Allowance to 3 months.
  - Enabling unemployed people who want to go back to education, and who are funding their own studies, to claim back up to two years of their income tax.
  - Lifting the cap on places in Further Education colleges.
  - Using spare capacity in our universities and Institutes of Technology for re-training opportunities.
  - Providing training to equip people to find employment in the emerging Environmental Goods and Services Sector.
  - Re-tool our industrial policy to preserve skilled jobs, even when the original employer has left the country.
  - Create a Universal Service Obligation (USO) for broadband, to ensure a high quality, universal broadband network.
  - Expand the function and job creation capacities of County Enterprise Boards, and give greater discretion to these CEBs to contribute to employment creation, including raising the threshold on the number of jobs that they can support.

Click [here](#) download a copy of the Labour Party Local Election Manifesto

**GREEN PARTY**

According to the Green Party Local Election Manifesto 2009, a vote for a Green Party candidate promises / notes the following in relation to lifelong learning and education:

The Green Party is strongly committed to investment in our education system on a lifelong basis from early development through to adult education. We believe that failure to invest in education leads to serious inequalities in society which, in the long-term, lead to suffering for all, whether through increased taxes, an increased crime rate or a reduction in our economic potential. Budgetary constraints due to the current economic downturn mean that in this area, in particular, we have had to accept cuts which are highly unpalatable. The Green Party has worked hard in government to mitigate the effects of these cuts as much as possible. Although local authorities do not have overall authority in the area of education, they nonetheless contribute in many ways to the educational environment in their local area.

- Arrangements are put in place in liaison with school boards to allow multi-use of school facilities outside of school hours.
- The local VEC is supported by whatever means available in its endeavours to further educate the local community. Many councillors sit on the Boards of VECs and this provides a direct link between the local authority and VECs to work together on further education so that education becomes a genuinely lifelong experience.
- Third-level grants are distributed efficiently so that those most in need are enabled to participate in third-level education.
- Post-primary Transition-year internships in local authorities and volunteer centres are encouraged so that young people develop a sense of participation in the public life of their locality.
- Libraries provide the best support for students including mobile units and up-to-date technology for homework and research.
- Libraries encourage the use of their facilities by those who may be socially excluded through, for example, 'Bibliotherapy' (book readings), a form of therapy widely used in the UK to treat people with depression but which is also used as a social outlet for elderly people or those with literacy difficulties.
- All persons are provided with adequate and appropriate information about services and entitlements in a range of formats and languages.

- Older people are provided with real and efficient local transport options.

Click [here](#) download a copy of the Green Party Local Election Manifesto

### SINN FEIN

According to the Sinn Fein Local Election Manifesto 2009, a vote for a Sinn Fein candidate promises / notes the following in relation to lifelong learning and education:

- Campaign against education cuts and for significant increases in investment in education with a focus on ensuring sufficient provision for local disadvantaged students.
- No reintroduction of third level fees. Part-time fees eliminated, the number of third level places reserved for mature students increased, social welfare recipients permitted to retain their benefits while in full-time study and the eligibility criteria for the Back to Work Allowance expanded – all of which will help enable low income and unemployed persons and single parents to return to education.
- Oppose the introduction of third level fees and support reform of the granting system in a way that truly opens access to third level to students from low income backgrounds.
- Use positions on VECs to advocate a coordinated approach between the VECs, FÁS and the third level institutions, to ensure sufficient provision of local training for sectors that will provide jobs in the coming decades.
- Propose that all available public classroom space is optimally utilised at all times, ie. for out-of-hours training for workers
- Oppose segregated schooling. Promote local education and childcare provision more responsive to the needs of New Community / Traveller children and their families, including targeted programmes where appropriate
- Provision of a funding package for local authorities to deliver community-based music and arts education projects in disadvantaged communities.
- Engage directly with all arts, sports, cultural and community groups to determine local needs and promote local leadership and participation in arts and sports and use

membership on the Recreation and Amenities Strategic Municipal Policy Committees and otherwise to ensure that councils do the same.

- Ensure that better use is made of existing civic buildings (including town halls and libraries) to deliver access to the arts (including music education and drama), while also ensuring that all such facilities are accessible to people with disabilities.
- An end to education budget cuts and a significant increase in public investment in education to at least the OECD average (6% of GDP), to eliminate the need for private fundraising.
- No Public-Private Partnerships in public education, which have proved detrimental or disastrous in other jurisdictions.
- Reversal of cuts to provision of learning support.
- Realistic funding for basic essential student college expenses such as accommodation, childcare, travel, text books, etc.
- Engage with local teachers' unions, parents' organisations, student groups and education providers to identify priorities and lobby the Minister for Education to ensure the educational needs of all in the community are met.
- Propose a state-wide review of VECs to achieve standardisation of policy and any other reforms needed to make them more accountable to and representative of the local communities they serve.
- Use positions on VECs to ensure focus on tackling local educational disadvantage, including provision of breakfast and homework clubs.
- Use positions on VECs to ensure an adequate network of local community training centres, literacy services and back to education programmes that correspond fully to the diversity of local need – including increased need as a result of recession-driven unemployment.
- Propose that all available public classroom space is optimally utilised at all times, ie. for out-of-hours training for workers.
- Take action to secure the provision of more public buses in rural areas and also support community-based rural transport initiatives particularly for older people.

Click [here](#) download a copy of the Sinn Fein Local Election Manifesto