

What Starmer did not say about education that he should...

Published: January 13, 2026, 6:08 am

The Guardian [notes this morning](#) that:

Teachers' workloads are being increasingly stretched by their pupils' mental health and family difficulties, according to MPs who were critical of the government's efforts to tackle chronic staff shortages in England's schools.

They added:

The education select committee said it was "concerned that since the pandemic teachers are spending more time on addressing issues that would typically fall outside the remit of schools, including family conflict resolution and mental health support," and called for the government to support better provision inside and outside schools.

Tellingly, they also noted that:

The MPs said those tasks were contributing to the excessive workload cited by teachers as pushing them out of the profession, while it said reports of deteriorating pupil behaviour could also be discouraging prospective teachers.

Let me put this in context. Yesterday Keir Starmer promised he would recruit an additional 6,500 teachers in England. There are roughly 500,000 teachers in England right now. That means he plans to add just 1.3 per cent to their total - which I think we can reasonably describe as an almost insignificant goal. But he said it nonetheless.

What he did not say was what he was going to do to make the lives of teachers better so that more would wish to stay in the profession when so many leave within years of completing their training.

Here, he could have talked about better pay, and if he had, he would have been right to do so.

He could have talked about more support. Again, he would have been right to do so.

He could have talked about removing the ghastly quasi-market structure of education, which is designed to oppress those working at the front of classrooms.

He could have addressed the problems with assessment, which is excessive and fails to appraise almost any of the skills that anyone - including employers - really values in young people joining the workforce, but does instead focus on skills almost no one needs.

But most of all, he could have talked about the biggest problems of all in schools.

He could have talked about the dire ventilation in schools that let Covid spread and maintains carbon dioxide at levels so high that almost no one can learn in them.

He could have talked about ending the two-child benefit cap that puts about a million children into poverty and leaves them living in families with such deep stress that, of course, some of those children are disruptive in school.

He could have talked about redistribution from the wealthiest to those in need.

He could have addressed the issue of insecurity in private rented accommodation, which means that far too many children move too often to school, which has a dire impact on their educational achievement.

He could have said he would ensure that interest rates are cut so that the folly of the Bank of England is not foisted on households with large mortgages, many of whom will include children, denying them the childhoods they deserve, all to serve the interests of bankers.

He could have said all this, and no doubt more. But he didn't. Because he doesn't care about children, or teachers, or the families that support those children and those teachers. He only cares about balancing the books and serving the interests of big business.

And that is why he will be a dismal prime minister.