

## Raising expectations

**Proposals to raise the school leaving age - compelling students to remain in education or training beyond 16 - met with a variety of strong reactions in a recent talk2learn debate.**

Some contributors thought the plans would be difficult to turn from theory into practice but most foresaw problems in selling the proposals to young people.

Charlotte Haynes, a science teacher in Corby, said that keeping some children in education would be completely wrong for them.

"Providing better apprenticeships which cater for the less academic and raising their profile in school will keep many more students in education through their own choice," she said. "We have all taught the disaffected student in year 11 that no one can control but no one will exclude because of performance figures; do we really want to make things worse?"

Ann Hartley, a school administrator in Lancashire, said that many young people wanted to become financially independent as soon as they could.

"If they are expected to stay on until they are 18, are parents going to be able to carry on supporting them? *For affluent families this will not be a problem but it could be an issue for families on a low income.*"

Kim Quigley, an AST in Solihull, thought children were receiving mixed messages on the school leaving age.

"On the one hand, we are saying we want individuals to be able to evaluate and access information, solve problems and be able to make decisions but, on the other, we are saying you can't leave education until you are 18 - although you can marry and have children.



*"We want people to have a love of learning but I am not sure insisting individuals stay in education until they are 18 is going to do this."*

Colette Hamilton, who works in a special school in Berkshire, was keen to encourage young people to seek further education, rather than compel them.

"At school, we implement a variety of tactics to encourage pupils to stay on and gain some sort of qualification. But our pupils are only too ready to leave by the age of 16 - let alone 18.

"They are encouraged to take on a college course at Year 10, such as motor mechanics and child care. But as this year's list of candidates proves, despite much encouragement and support, by the end of the year the majority are unable to cope with such a regular commitment. *How can we ensure that all children see the relevance of further education and get them to sign up for a further two years?"*

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