Coalition policies for inequality:

- Free school meals for all children in reception, year one, and year two.
- The pupil premium - money that schools receive for each pupil from a disadvantaged background.

Criticisms:

Ofsted (2012) found that in many cases the pupil premium is not spent on those it is supposed to help. Only one in ten head teachers said that it has significantly changed how they supported pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.

As part of the coalition government’s ‘austerity’ programme, spending on many areas of education has been cut: spending on school buildings was cut by 60%, many Sure Start centres were closed, the Education Maintenance allowance (EMA) was abolished, and university tuition fees tripled to £9000 a year.

Critics argue that cutting Sure Start and the EMA has reduced opportunities for working-class pupils. Similarly, increased university fees may discourage them from entering higher education.

Privatisation

- Transfer of public assets to private companies.
- Education became a source for profit - Ball (2007) - ‘education services industry’.
- Companies become involved in building the schools, staffing them, inspecting, and providing careers advice.
- Public/private partnerships (PPP’s) to help school building projects. Companies pay for it and then lease it to the council for a management fee out of public funds.
- These schemes are highly profitable for companies - they can make up to 10 times more than other contracts. Councils have to take them up on the offers as there is so little funding from governments.

Public/private boundary:

Many senior officials in the public sector, such as directors or local authorities and head teachers, now leave to set up work for private sectors education businesses. These companies then bid for contracts to provide services to schools and local authorities. E.g. two companies set up in this way hold four of the five national contracts for school inspection services. Pollack (2004) - This flow of personnel allows companies to buy ‘insider knowledge’ to help win contracts, as well as side-stepping local authority democracy.

Privatisation and globalisation of education policy:

Many private companies in the education service industry are foreign-owned. Edexcel is owned by the US educational publishing and testing giant Pearson, and according to Ball, some Pearson GCSE exam answers are now marked in Sydney and Iowa.

Similarly, according to Buckingham and Scanlon (2005), the UK’s 4 leading educational software companies are all owned by global multi-nationals (Disney, Hambro, and Vivendi). Many contracts