

Government offers Cuts and Academies... The Unions can stop it!

Your school could become an academy this term

The Government has announced that all schools will be able to become academies, and those judged to be 'outstanding' by Ofsted will be automatically approved and fast-tracked.

The Government is rushing legislation through Parliament to allow schools to make a decision about this before the end of term. Michael Gove has written to all schools inviting them to do this.

The Government are extending the academies programme to primary schools for the first time.

This is a very big extension of the academies programme. At the moment there are only 203 academies, but there are 600 'outstanding' secondary schools and 2,000 'outstanding' primary schools. Academy status for all the 'outstanding' secondary schools could reintroduce the grammar/secondary modern divide - a two tier school system. Perhaps this will benefit the haves but the news will not be so good for the rest.

The Government are going to create a new type of 'free' school. They are very similar to

academies, but 'free schools' will be founded in response to parents, or other groups, who want a new school in their area. Again this is more likely to benefit those parents and organisations with the know-how to fight for the interests of their children.

What is an academy?

Academies can be described as "independent state schools". These schools will be funded centrally by the government and the money will be taken away from the local authority. Crucially academies:

- ☒ don't have to employ teachers on national pay and conditions
- ☒ can set their own admission policies
- ☒ are controlled by an external sponsor

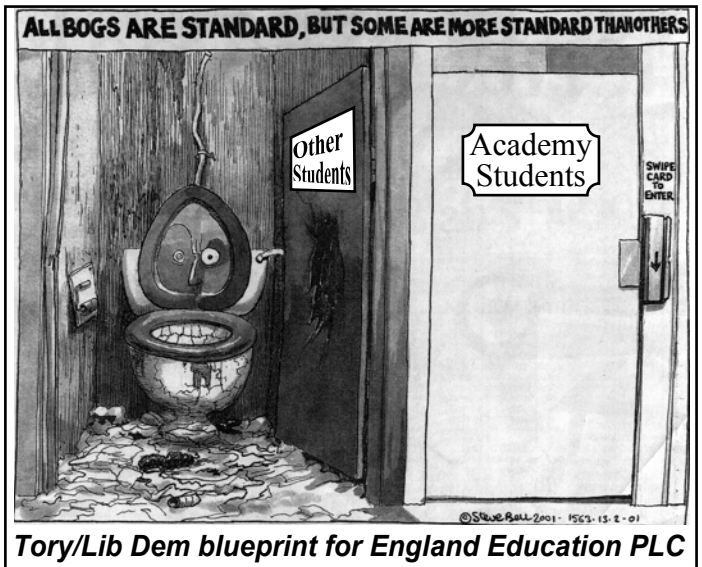
Is there extra money for schools that opt out?

The only extra money available for schools that opt to become academies will be taken from money the local authority holds centrally for support services. Each new academy will get its share of this money and the central fund reduced accordingly.

What services does the local authority provide?

Under the funding agreement with schools the local authority holds a central fund to provide vital services to schools like:

- ☺ SEN support
- ☺ Education psychology
- ☺ School transport
- ☺ NQT induction



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- ☺ inspection and advice
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Academies will have to buy these services from somewhere else or buy them back from the LA.

What about the curriculum?

Michael Gove says academies will be given the power to innovate and develop their own curriculum. But the Government has promised a review of the curriculum and to give all schools more freedom.

Is this a new idea?

Various governments have promoted this model of education – where all schools are run independently, with no strategic role for LAs. In the past though they have had to ballot parents or consult with all interested parties. Up to now LA have been able to approve or veto planned academies. Often parents have supported teachers in saying they don't want this to happen. This time it's different.

So, who will decide on this?

The Government is bringing forward legislation to allow governors to make this decision by a simple majority vote at a meeting. They won't have to consult parents or staff. Where is the democracy in this approach?

What does the NUT say?

All the teachers' unions strongly oppose academy status, primarily because of the effect on local planned education provision, but also because it leads to selection and a two tier service, as well as threatening the pay and conditions of school based staff.

- **Christine Blower**, NUT General Secretary says, **"There is no evidence that the the creation of Academies has raised standards."**
- **Chris Keates** of the NASUWT says, **"academies and free schools are a recipe for educational inequality and social segregation."**

- **Mary Bousted** of the ATL says, **"these plans are irresponsible and not thought through."**

Can we stop this?

Yes we can – if we organise and show our opposition. Nationally all the teaching unions above and Unison have written to schools urging heads and governors to reject the proposals in Gove's letter.

We think many parents and governors can be persuaded by our arguments. Because the move to an academy involves a change of employer it is possible for trade unions to take strike action to prevent this happening. The NUT has already done this to defend members in existing academies.

What should you do?

- Talk to your headteacher**
- Organise a joint union meeting to discuss this**
- Find out when your governors are meeting**
- Write to your governors and ask to meet them**
- Contact the NUT for advice and for a speaker**

A good local school for every child!

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