



# ACADEMIES

LOOKING BEYOND THE SPIN  
WHY THE NUT CALLS FOR A  
DIFFERENT APPROACH

NATIONAL UNION OF TEACHERS

**//** The Academies programme is expanding even though it has not been proven to be successful for pupils in Academies nor has it been independently evaluated for its impact on other local schools. The NUT believes that the Academies programme should be halted and that existing Academies should be re-integrated within their local authorities' community of schools. **//**

NUT 2007

## INTRODUCTION

### BEYOND THE SPIN

This campaigning document, 'Academies: Looking Beyond the Spin: Why the NUT calls for a different approach', sets out the key reasons for the NUT's opposition to the Academies initiative. It contains the latest evidence on Academies, gathered from research, media reports, the experiences of NUT members involved with Academies and of other campaigning groups, including the Anti Academy Alliance. This evidence bears out the Union's serious reservations about the concept driving the Academies programme which is essentially that of competition and private sector involvement in education.

2007 has seen an unprecedented level of campaigning all over the country against individual Academies, including campaigners occupying the site of a proposed Academy in Wembley Park in Brent in tents!

The Anti-Academy Alliance organised a Committee of Enquiry in the House of Commons on 12 June at which MPs heard evidence from the school workforce unions, parents' and governors' organisations, education researchers and almost 30 local campaigning groups.

The evidence presented revealed a damning indictment of the Academies initiative – unsuitable sites, undesirable sponsors, the closure of good and improving schools, local consultations ignored, local authorities bullied through Building Schools for the Future funding, the manipulation of pupil intakes and admissions policies, scant regard for pupils with special educational needs and concerns about the curriculum being offered to pupils in Academies. Overwhelmingly the message was that the Academies initiative was damaging local schools and was being foisted on reluctant local authorities, parents, governors and teachers.

Also in July, in response to the 2006 Congress resolution, the TUC launched the report commissioned from Martin Rogers of the Children's Services Network, 'A New Direction: A Review of the School Academies Programme'. This report will stimulate further debate led by the school workforce unions at this year's TUC.

But there is a further reason why the timing of the publication of this document is important. There has been a change of Government, with a new Prime Minister and new Secretary of State for Education. The NUT hopes that this will mean a change of direction on Academies. From the early speeches of Gordon Brown and Ed Balls, there have been some encouraging signs such as: a stronger role for local authorities and universities; an emphasis on Academies being part of their local community and collaboration with other schools; and Academies following the core National Curriculum in English, maths, science and IT. The government have also indicated that they wish to address other concerns about the credibility of sponsors.

Raising achievement for all pupils, but particularly those in the most challenging circumstances, is an aim which needs a partnership approach and the expertise and best efforts of all stakeholders in the education service. The NUT hopes that the Government will "look beyond the spin" on Academies and focus on what really works to improve the life chances of our young people. In this document, the NUT calls on the Government to take a different approach.



Steve Sinnott  
General Secretary

## WHAT ARE ACADEMIES?

1. Academies are independent schools run by private sponsors such as businesses or religious organisations using public money. The Government intended Academies to replace schools which are either in special measures or “underachieving”, or to meet a demand for places by creating new schools.
2. For £2 million and often less, a sponsor can take over a school controlling its admissions, governing body, curriculum and teachers’ pay and conditions. Academies receive their funding directly from the Government rather than via local authorities. Crucially, therefore, they are outside the local authority “family” of schools and are not accountable to the community through locally elected councillors.
3. The Government has proposed that at least 400 Academies should be established, doubling the previous target. This would mean that more than 1 in 10 secondary schools would be Academies. The first three opened in September 2002 and by September 2007 there will be 82 Academies. The Schools Commissioner predicted that 50 Academies per year will be coming on stream.
4. The Academies programme is expanding even though it has not been proven to be successful for pupils in Academies nor has it been independently evaluated for its impact on other local schools. The NUT believes that the Academies programme should be halted and that existing Academies should be re-integrated within their local authorities’ community of schools.
5. Academies were vigorously promoted by Tony Blair as Prime Minister and education minister, Lord Adonis. Although the current Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, and Secretary of State, Ed Balls, have publicly confirmed their support for Academies, there have been indications of policy changes to strengthen and encourage the role of local authorities and universities as sponsors of Academies and to ensure that Academies follow the National Curriculum in English, mathematics, science and IT.
6. The NUT hopes that the new Government will listen to the serious concerns of the teachers, parents and governors who oppose Academies and use the funding and resources devoted to this flawed initiative on a more equitable basis for the benefit of all pupils.

## WHY THE NUT OPPOSES THE ACADEMIES INITIATIVE

### **Reason 1: Academies put schools in the hands of sponsors**

7. Creating Academies in place of community or foundation schools involves the transfer of publicly funded assets to unaccountable sponsoring bodies. For a contribution of around 8 per cent (maximum £2 million ) of the cost of building a new, or refurbishing an old, school building to form an Academy, the sponsors are given control of a modern independent school set up as a company limited by guarantee. Sponsors receive the entire school budget directly from the Government.
8. Academies on the scale proposed by the Government would have the effect of transferring billions of pounds worth of publicly funded assets in the form of buildings and land into the hands of private sponsors.
9. The suitability of sponsors leaves much to be desired. They are not required to have educational expertise or experience. As examples, Academy sponsors include Roger de Haan, former Chief Executive of Saga Holidays, Amey plc, a construction and management firm, Christian philanthropist, Sir Peter Vardy, of Reg Vardy car dealership and David Samworth, a sausage, pies and ready meals manufacturer.

10. The 'Times Educational Supplement' of 4 August 2006 ran a feature on the Academies due to open that year highlighting the "bizarre mix of sponsors" – football club (West Bromwich Albion), faith groups (Church of England, Christian Vision, United Learning Trust), bank (HSBC), pub chain owner (Jack Petchey), carpet retailer (Lord Harris), charities (ARK, Ormiston Trust).

## Financial Contributions

11. The financial contribution of the sponsor is not straightforward. The sponsor's contribution was originally proposed to be £2 million, about 20 per cent of the total costs of a new school, with an additional £8 million from the Government, i.e., £10 million per Academy in total. In reality, the building costs of Academies have soared up to £40 million, but with no proportionate increase in sponsors' contributions.

12. In May 2006, 'The Guardian' revealed that only four of the 27 Academies opened to date had received the full £2 million pledged from sponsors. Four Academies which opened in September 2005 had received no cash at all. The sponsors of the most expensive Academy, Haberdashers' Aske's Knights Academy, Lewisham, appear to have contributed only £300,000 to date, and around £700, 000 to their other Academy in Lewisham.

13. The latest prospectus for Academies (May 2007) confirmed changes in the sponsorship arrangements to an endowment model, to fund activities over and above core education, rather than the original contribution towards capital building costs.

14. Academy sponsors have used Academies to further their business interests.

- West London Academy, Ealing, is sponsored by Alec Reed, chairman of Reed Executive. Its accounts, published in 2004, revealed that the Academy paid a total of £180,964 to businesses and a charity with major connections to Alec Reed.
- King's Academy, Middlesbrough, sponsored by Sir Peter Vardy, was billed by organisations and individuals with connections to Sir Peter Vardy for £290,214, including £14,039 to the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.
- Grace Academy in Solihull was reported by 'The Guardian' (5 March 2007) to have awarded three contracts totalling £281,000 over two years for payroll and management services to the IM Group, a company owned by Bob Edmiston, the car dealer and property developer who sponsors the Academy. Bob Edmiston is an evangelical Christian and founded Christian Vision, which had been involved in circulating teaching resources on creationism to schools. The Academy also paid £53,000 to Christian Vision for management services.

## Honours

15. In January 2006, the 'Sunday Times' reported that a senior advisor to the Academies programme had resigned after he was caught encouraging the sponsorship of Academies in return for honours. The advisor promised that if a sponsor made a large enough donation, an honour would be a certainty.

16. The whole question of links between contributions/loans to the Labour Party, sponsorship of Academies and the honours system has cast a shadow over this aspect of the Academies initiative. Two academy sponsors, Sir David Garrard (Bexley Academy) and Barry Townsley (Stockley Academy, Hillingdon) have been turned down for peerages as being "unsuitable". It seems strange, therefore, that they have been deemed to be suitable to sponsor and have considerable influence over pupils' education in Academies.

## Religious Organisations and Academies

17. The NUT has concerns about the extent of the involvement of religious organisations in Academies. Around half of Academies approved or planned will be in the control of Christian organisations. The largest single sponsor of the Academies programme is the United Learning Trust, an arm of the Church Schools Company.
18. Evangelical Christians sponsor a number of Academies. The Emmanuel Foundation, run by evangelical Christian, Sir Peter Vardy, plans to establish a chain of Academies. It already sponsors Academies in Middlesbrough and Doncaster, as well as the Emmanuel City Technology College in Gateshead.
19. Channel 4 Dispatches Programme (6 March 2006) investigated the activities of various evangelical Christian groups in the UK. A substantial part of the programme was devoted to Sir Peter Vardy's involvement in education.
20. Teachers at Emmanuel Foundation schools spoke about the emphasis placed on Christianity and "bible bashing", particularly in assemblies and what was described as a "totalitarian, repressed atmosphere". The teaching of creationism was explored in the programme, which pupils claimed was taught alongside evolutionary theory as being an equally valid belief. They claimed that they had been told to use evolution in examinations.
21. The programme raised important questions about the right of individual sponsors to impose their views on a state school, particularly if those views included the promotion of questionable religious doctrines. It questioned the Government's policy which enabled such a situation to be imposed on pupils and parents via their local school.
22. Sponsors from religious organisations, including the Church of England, the Catholic Church, the United Learning Trust and the Oasis Trust are heavily involved in the Academies programme which will add to the number and proportion of schools with a religious ethos. This could have a major impact on community cohesion and leave the many parents who do not wish their children to attend a school with a religious character with restricted choice.

**NOTE:** For more information about Academy sponsors, and other aspects of the Academies programme, refer to 'The Great City Academy Fraud' by Francis Beckett, published by Continuum ([www.continuumbooks.com](http://www.continuumbooks.com)) in April 2007, which was sponsored by the National Union of Teachers.

## Reason 2: Academies Threaten Fair Admissions Procedures

23. Academies have a destabilising effect on the capacity of other neighbouring schools to achieve a balance of abilities amongst their pupil intakes. The publicity surrounding Academies gives parents the impression that they are the "best" secondary schools in the area irrespective of the quality of other schools. Their brand new buildings and glossy image on show during visits by Government ministers can act as magnets for parents. This has resulted in Academies being heavily over-subscribed, irrespective of the realities of their educational attainment.

## Differential in Finances

24. Academies are not operating on a "level playing field" with maintained schools in the financial resources available to them. The National Audit Office report of February 2007 confirmed that Academies had cost more to build than other secondary schools – £24 million on average compared with the latest figures for non-Academy secondary schools of £20-£22 million. But these average costs conceal the fact that costs are much higher for new-build Academies. Haberdashers' Aske's Knights Academy in Lewisham remains the most expensive at over

£40 million but there are 7 Academies costing over £30 million. The NAO report revealed that 17 of the first 26 Academies had capital cost overruns, averaging £3 million.

25. The 'Times Educational Supplement' (18 May 2007) published the results of an investigation into the accounts of 14 Academies filed at Companies House for the 2005-06 academic year. Using comparative data from the DfES website for non-Academy schools, it showed that, on average, Academies received almost £1,600 more per pupil in funding (an average of £6,500) than neighbouring comprehensives (£4,900).

## **Admissions Practices**

26. The admissions arrangements for Academies have to be agreed by the Secretary of State as part of their funding agreements. They must be consistent with the code of practice on admissions and with admissions law, but they are their own admissions authorities, rather than being part of local authority arrangements.
27. A report published in June 2007 by the Institute of Public Policy Research, a think-tank close to the Government, entitled 'School admissions: Fair choice for parents and pupils' showed that some schools were covertly selecting their pupils and that these were more likely to be schools which had authority over their own admissions, including Academies. The report proposed that local authorities should be responsible for admission arrangements.
28. There is a wide diversity of practice regarding admissions in Academies including entrance tests, various forms of banding, sibling places, random selection such as lotteries as well as selection by aptitude. The criteria used by Academies in respect of distance from school, however, also varies. The complexity of these arrangements means that there is a lack of transparency for parents in understanding how the Academies' admissions systems work.
29. Pupils with special educational needs who do not have Academies named in their statements are given "equal consideration" according to the funding agreements. In practice, SEN pupils are disadvantaged when applying to those Academies which operate ability banding systems because, depending on the nature of their SEN, they are likely to be clustered in a narrow range of bands.
30. There is evidence to suggest that Academies are seeking to attract more academically successful pupils. For the Bristol Academy, expensive leaflets advertising the Academy were distributed in only the more affluent areas. One of the first Academies to open, Greig in Haringey, targeted leafy suburbs several miles away, rather than the neighbourhood area which was severely deprived.
31. This "back door" method of selection means that many young people will be rejected. Schools will choose pupils rather than be chosen by parents and Academies will not be serving pupils within their neighbourhoods.
- Walsall Academy replaced a school which served a socially deprived neighbouring area. Within three years of the Academy opening, the number of pupils on free school meals had halved.
  - The Lambeth Academy opened in 2004 with fewer than 9 per cent of pupils on free school meals, while the Lambeth average was 38 per cent.

## **Pupils with Special Educational Needs**

32. Subject to the impact on the efficiency of provision, funding agreements generally require Academies to give their consent before they can be named by local authorities in statements for pupils with special educational needs. The final decision, however, rests with the Secretary

of State. Barrister, David Wolfe, has spoken of the lack of rights and legislative protection for pupils with SEN in relation to Academies compared with pupils in state schools: "Quite simply they (Academies) operate outside the law as it applies in the maintained sector." (Anti Academies Alliance Committee of Enquiry, 12 June 2007)

33. An article in the journal 'Children Now' in March 2006 highlighted the drop in numbers of pupils with SEN at two of the more academically successful Academies compared with their predecessor schools. In Walsall Academy the numbers fell from 41 per cent to 8 per cent and in the City Academy Bristol numbers fell from 46 per cent to 28 per cent. Of 14 Academies, the total percentage of children with SEN had fallen at 7 Academies; the percentage of children with SEN statements had fallen at 8 Academies.

### **Exclusions**

34. Pupil exclusions in Academies have tended to be much higher than neighbouring schools, leaving these schools to take on excluded pupils. The exclusion rates for Academies for 2004-05 show them running significantly higher than for neighbouring local authority schools, for example:
- West London Academy permanently excluded 22 pupils; a percentage of 1.95 compared with 0.49 Ealing LA percentage;
  - Capital City Academy permanently excluded 11 pupils; a percentage of 1.21 compared with 0.49 Brent LA percentage;
  - Djanogly City Academy permanently excluded 11 pupils; a percentage of 0.70 compared with 0.42 Nottingham LA percentage;
  - Northampton Academy permanently excluded 9 pupils; a percentage of 0.72 compared with 0.25 Northamptonshire LA percentage;
  - King's Academy permanently excluded 7 pupils; a percentage of 0.67 compared with 0.18 Middlesborough LA percentage.

### **Reason 3: Academies threaten teachers' pay and working conditions**

35. Academies – as independent schools – can operate outside the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD) and the Burgundy Book. Government guidance states that it is *"the responsibility of the Academy to agree levels of pay and conditions of service with its employees and to employ appropriate staff numbers"*.
36. While teachers transferring from predecessor schools have their pay and conditions protected under TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment)), newly appointed staff are not protected in this way. Many of the current Academies operate two different contracts, one for transferees and one for new staff, with all the tensions that will bring, including pressure from the sponsors to "harmonise" the two groups under the new contract.
37. Some Academies are anti-union. NUT regional and local officials have reported difficulties in obtaining permission to visit to speak to members, recruit or participate in negotiations. Whilst the NUT has secured recognition and collective bargaining in a number of Academies, including some multi-employer Academies such as the ULT, difficulties remain in some others.
38. Anecdotal evidence suggests that there is a detrimental impact on teacher workload in some Academies. From the evidence of the Union's own monitoring, and the evaluation

commissioned by the Government from PricewaterhouseCoopers, the time and resources spent on establishing the Academy and developing business partnerships is detracting from core teaching and leadership responsibilities.

39. There are also intense pressures on teachers to deliver quick wins in terms of increased examination results. OFSTED, the National Audit Office and PWC have all noted that claims of attainment have often been over-stated and that there is evidence of high turnover of staff in some Academies – with the knock on effect of destabilising pupils' education.
- Unity Academy in Middlesbrough has had three head teachers since it opened in 2002 and spent £250,000 on supply cover last year due to long-term absence from stress. OFSTED reported that up to a third of staff were absent at any one time.
  - Greig Academy in Haringey has had 58 teachers leave in one year.
  - In May 2005, the 'Times Educational Supplement' reported that 6 out of 12 Academy head teachers had resigned in the first 18 months.
40. NUT monitoring suggests there has also been a significant increase in the use of teaching assistants and reduction of numbers of qualified teachers employed.

#### **Reason 4: Academies do not offer pupils a better education than other local schools**

41. The Government has said that Academies "*can combine a greater flexibility over the curriculum with the sponsorship and expertise of religious, private or voluntary sector contributors to raise the achievements of pupils.*" Several Academies have experimented with radical approaches to the curriculum delivered though, for example, three hour learning sessions and longer school days to replicate "business hours" and an extensive use of ICT (West London, Bexley, Walsall). These have not always proved to be successful in terms of examination results and pupil motivation. Doubts have been raised about the compatibility of flexibility with the provision of a broad and balanced curriculum, particularly if this is influenced by sponsors.
42. Nearly half of Academies offer business as their specialism, with technology and sport also popular. Shortage subjects such as modern foreign languages, maths and science are less well served. The vocational/academic divide is actually encouraged by the particular specialisms adopted in some Academies.
43. In Manchester, for example, six new Academies are planned, each of which will concentrate on offering the new specialised vocational diplomas for 14-19 year olds. This could have serious implications for pupils' equality of opportunity and career choices as early as age 11 because their secondary school would focus on a particular vocational option, such as construction or health care. Similar developments are proposed in Birmingham, Newcastle and Nottingham.

#### **OFSTED inspections**

44. To date, no Academy predecessor school was in the OFSTED special measures category; many were making good progress in challenging circumstances.
45. OFSTED inspections of Academies have been a mixed bag, demonstrating that Academy status in itself is not the answer to raising pupil achievement.
- In December 2004, OFSTED was damning about the quality of teaching and learning at the Bexley Academy. Pupils spent one day a week learning about business on the school's mini stock exchange and trading floor. Teaching of the National Curriculum was limited to the remaining four days of the week. Its pupils achieved poor exam results in 2005.

- In May 2005, Unity Academy, Middlesbrough, became the first Academy to be placed in special measures. A wide range of weaknesses were identified – fragile leadership, inappropriate futuristic buildings, high staff absence and poor pupil learning, behaviour and attitudes. The Academy’s re-inspection report, published in March 2006, said that “inadequate progress” had been made and that it remained in special measures.
  - The funding agreement for the West London Academy emphasised the ethos of enterprise in the curriculum to engender an attitude of self-management and independent learning. The structure of the Academy school day originally had two three-hours sessions in a 30 hour week to enable pupils to work on real situations and simulations. However, in June 2005, OFSTED expressed serious concerns about the standard of education at the West London Academy. Inspectors said that the curriculum lacked breadth and balance and noted the high rates of exclusion, more than 80 in one year, three times higher than the previous year, with 20 pupils being permanently excluded.
46. The National Audit Office report of February 2007 said that of the 11 Academies inspected to date, four (36 per cent) were judged to have good or outstanding teaching and learning. The equivalent proportion for all secondary schools is 51 per cent.

### **Test and Examination Results**

47. The Government concentrates relentlessly on the good news in the statistics on test and examination results for Academies – their faster rate of improvement. This is, of course, positive for pupils and their teachers in Academies but these statistics need to be treated with caution.
48. DfES statistics on GCSE and equivalent examinations results published in January 2007 contained a breakdown on results in the 14 Academies which had been open long enough to have results in 2005 and 2006.
49. These figures showed that these Academies were 17.7 per cent behind the national average for 5 A-C grades (41.5 per cent compared with 59.2 per cent) but had a higher rate of improvement of 4.8 per cent compared with 2.2 per cent nationally.
50. When English and maths were included within the 5 A-C grades, however, these Academies trailed by 34 per cent – 21.8 per cent compared with the national average of 45.8 per cent. Again the rate of improvement was higher at 6.2 per cent compared with 1.0 per cent nationally.
51. Interesting comparisons can also be made between Academies and other Government initiatives for schools operating in areas of deprivation given in the same statistics. For example, the figures for 5 A-C grades for Excellence in Cities schools was 53.1 per cent and for the 10 per cent most deprived areas was 47.6 per cent; both higher than the Academy figure of 41.5 per cent.
52. These figures show that, purely in GCSE outcomes, Academies trail other categories of schools, even those with high levels of deprivation.
53. David Bell, former Chief Inspector of Schools and currently Permanent Secretary at the DCSF, admitted to the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee on 14 March 2007 that he was greatly concerned about examination results in Academies, saying, *“We are starting from a low base. There is still a huge amount to do.”*
54. Research by Professor Stephen Gorard of York University suggested that where Academies were raising their standards, they were doing so by improving their intake rather than doing better with the same pupils. He found that only one of the early Academies was still serving the most disadvantaged pupils in the area.

## **Reason 5: Academies undermine the independent role of school governors**

55. The governance arrangements for Academies differ substantially from those of local authority schools which have a balance of places for key “stakeholders”, particularly elected parent and staff governors, as well as representatives of the local community and the local authority. Initially sponsors were “invited”, but not obliged, to include local authority or elected representation on school governing bodies. Academy governing bodies were only required to have one member of the local authority on the governing body.
56. The latest version of the prospectus for Academies (May 2007) confirmed that the private sector or charitable sponsor always appointed the majority of governors, even when the local authority was a co-sponsor. This illustrates how control of the governing body is unfairly weighted in favour of the external sponsor at the expense of other local stakeholders, including parents, staff, and particularly the local authority.

## **Reason 6: Academies have a damaging impact on other neighbouring schools and on local authorities.**

57. Academies can create or reinforce local hierarchies of schools. The entitlement of Academies to select ten per cent of their pupils means that they are able to select more academically successful pupils. Coupled with the higher pupil exclusion rate in Academies, this means that schools in the same area are then forced to accept less able and more disruptive pupils, putting additional pressure on them.
58. A recent development is that of “all-through” Academies, educating primary and nursery age pupils as well as secondary, which involves the closure of existing primary as well as secondary schools. Bexley was one of the first Academies to pursue this option and considerable unease was reported among the staff of the primary schools involved. From September 2007, there will be nine all-through Academies bringing the ethos of the private sector into primary and early years education.
59. The existence of an Academy can place pressure on other local schools to change their practice or status.
- In Hackney, the motivation for a proposed Academy to replace Haggerston Girls’ school was that another Academy, the Bridge Academy, was proposed for a site nearby. Haggerston judged that it would not be able to compete unless it too become an Academy, because of the attraction of Academy status for parents and the additional funding which would accrue.
  - In Sandwell, other non-Academy schools have started selecting pupils by aptitude and were considering Trust school status as a direct consequence of competition from Academies.

## **Building Schools for the Future**

60. The Government has used the carrot of much-needed capital resources for schools through the Building Schools for the Future programme to promote its Academies programme. The Government guidance states that as part of their BSF plans, a local authority must consider and evaluate the option of including an Academy, although the guidance does not specify any requirement to have one. Many local authorities, however, have been put under pressure to include Academies within their BSF proposals to ensure that their proposals were approved. Examples are Wolverhampton, Newcastle, Barnsley,

Sandwell, Liverpool, Lambeth, Darlington. Some areas, however, have stood out against this pressure and still obtained BSF funding, e.g. Barking and Dagenham, Tower Hamlets and Burnley within Lancashire.

61. By integrating Academies into BSF proposals delivered by the Local Education Partnerships, local authorities have been drawn into the Academies programme and are emerging as co-sponsors of Academies – for example, Kent, Corporation of London, Swindon, Oxfordshire, City of Sunderland, Kensington and Chelsea, Brighton and Hove, Manchester. This involvement, however, should not mask the fact that Academies are still independent schools and have significant differences from other state schools.
62. The philosophy underpinning Academies is at odds with the Government’s ‘Every Child Matters’ agenda, which recognises and sustains the idea that every school is at the centre of its community. The duties of local authorities in co-ordinating and encouraging provision based in schools, such as childcare, would be more difficult to implement as Academies are not within local authority control.
63. Local authorities, therefore, have much more difficulty in planning coherent educational provision if Academies are able to exercise their independence in terms of funding and admissions. The education functions of some small local authorities would be unviable if too many secondary schools were replaced by Academies; some London authorities are currently facing that situation. The London Borough of Westminster, for example, was considering operating as an Education Trust. These developments damage the accountability mechanism between schools and parents and their locally elected councillors.

### **Academies under pressure**

64. While the NUT opposes the Academies initiative, it recognises the pressures on Academies created by the high expectations of the Government. Politically, it is important for the Government that the substantial financial investment in Academies should be seen to be succeeding, and quickly.
65. Academies are replacing some of the most challenging schools in the country. New buildings and equipment are welcome, and should be the right of all schools, but in themselves cannot work miracles. Only dedicated, highly qualified and motivated teaching staff, working in a supportive environment, can achieve sustained improvements in pupil achievement over time. There are no quick fixes to the deep-seated problems caused by deprivation.
66. Many NUT members will be working in Academies and the NUT is committed to the protection of their salaries, working conditions and professionalism. The Union is concerned that unrealistic pressures on Academies to deliver “quick wins” will be experienced by teaching staff. Already, reports of the turn-over among heads and senior staff in Academies is an indication of this pressure.

### **A Call to the Government**

67. **A different approach should be adopted by the Government. No one with any understanding or commitment to education would want a school to fail whatever its status. Children only have one chance to have a successful education in school. The NUT believes that it is precisely because Academies are outside the local authority family of schools that their isolation from local authority support makes them more vulnerable than other schools when problems arise. The NUT believes, therefore, the Government should:**
  - return Academies to maintained status;

- halt the expansion of the Academies programme and evaluate urgently the evidence on how schools in very challenging circumstances can be helped to make a difference to pupils' life chances. This evaluation would draw on such initiatives as the Academies programme, Excellence in Cities, the London Challenge, as well as on research evidence from the UK and internationally;
- engage in a dialogue with teachers, parents, governors, local authorities, trade unions and other stakeholders on how such schools can be supported, and how the principle of locally accountable, comprehensive education provision can be enhanced;
- establish a forum to encourage businesses or individuals wanting to make a contribution towards the education of young people to support schools rather than as a take over; and
- legislate for all state-funded schools to be part of their local authorities' admissions arrangements and to apply national pay and conditions for staff, including trade union recognition.

## WHAT TO DO IF AN ACADEMY IS PLANNED IN YOUR AREA

68. If an Academy is planned in your area look beyond the glossy Government spin which has accompanied recent Academy openings. Remember that the Government needs to present the initiative in the best possible light.
69. Above all, don't assume that an Academy is inevitable – successful campaigns have been – and are being – fought against Academies. Media coverage about Academies and their sponsors, poor OFSTED and exam results have all tarnished the Academies initiative. Active campaigns against Academies and in support of local comprehensive schools have highlighted how this initiative is being foisted on communities against the wishes of parents and teachers.
70. Here are some suggestions on what you might do.

### Teachers

- In the first instance, contact your NUT division/association or the regional office for further information. This is vital if your school is becoming an Academy or if you are considering applying for a teaching post in an Academy.
- Look on the Academies campaigning section of the Union's website ([www.teachers.org.uk](http://www.teachers.org.uk)) for further information and resources on campaigning against Academies, including the Union's guidance on working in an Academy.
- For advice on admissions, governance, sponsors and any proposed variations to the curriculum in Academies, contact Janet Theakston in the Privatisation of Education Unit at NUT Headquarters on 020 7380 4717 or e-mail [j.theakston@nut.org.uk](mailto:j.theakston@nut.org.uk).
- For guidance on pay and conditions of service arrangements in Academies, contact Andrew Morris in the Salaries and Conditions of Service Department at NUT Headquarters on 020 7380 4774 or e-mail [a.morris@nut.org.uk](mailto:a.morris@nut.org.uk).
- Contact the Anti Academies Alliance ([www.antiacademies.org.uk](http://www.antiacademies.org.uk)) for campaigning ideas and for information on local groups.

## Parents

- Contact the Anti Academies Alliance ([www.antiacademies.org.uk](http://www.antiacademies.org.uk)) for campaigning ideas and for information on local groups.
- Contact your local branch of CASE (The Campaign for State Education). CASE's website is located at [www.casenet.org.uk](http://www.casenet.org.uk).
- Talk to the parent governors of your school about your concerns.
- Look on the Academies campaigning section of the NUT website ([www.teachers.org.uk](http://www.teachers.org.uk)) for further information and resources on campaigning against Academies.

## Trade Union Members

- It is important that trade unions work together to campaign against Academies. Trade Union members should campaign jointly to preserve public services against private sector involvement.
- The TUC has taken a lead on this issue following resolutions adopted by recent Annual Congresses on privatisation and marketisation and has commissioned a review of the Academies programme, 'A New Direction' published in July 2007. Details available from [www.tuc.org.uk](http://www.tuc.org.uk).
- Look on the Academies campaigning section of the NUT website ([www.teachers.org.uk](http://www.teachers.org.uk)) for further information and resources on campaigning against Academies.
- Establish links with the NUT locally and other trade unions within the school and locally.
- Contact the Anti Academies Alliance ([www.antiacademies.org.uk](http://www.antiacademies.org.uk)) for campaigning ideas and for information on local groups.
- Look on the TUC on-line site ([www.unionreps.org.uk](http://www.unionreps.org.uk)). The site enables communication between union representatives on suggested campaign strategies and provides a forum for sharing ideas.
- Visit the education campaigns section of Unison's website to access briefing documents on Academies ([www.unison.org.uk/education/schools/campaigns.asp](http://www.unison.org.uk/education/schools/campaigns.asp)).

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