

# Anti Academies Alliance



[www.antiacademies.org.uk](http://www.antiacademies.org.uk)

“A good local school for every child”

## The case against Swedish style 'Free' Schools

**The new Tory / Lib Dem government is proposing the introduction of Swedish style 'Free' Schools. They claim that there is a need for more choice for parents, and that the 'Free' Schools are more effective.**

There have been a number of recent reports which show that this is not the case. This Briefing summarises this information.

In Sweden there are 635 independent primaries and 360 independent high schools. More than 10 per cent of Swedish pupils now attend such institutions until they reach 16, rising to 20 per cent in upper secondary (16-18). In larger urban areas such as Stockholm, half of all pupils attend independent schools.

### What are 'Free' Schools?

*“Today’s independent schools take various forms, from small parental cooperatives whose start-up may have been fuelled by the closure of a municipal school, to schools with a particular educational approach or subject specialism, and schools which are run by large for-profit education companies.”*

Skolverket report 2004. [www.skolverket.se](http://www.skolverket.se).

'Free' Schools are often opened in empty office blocks, industrial estates or other cheap accommodation. They often have very few facilities. They rarely have libraries, sending pupils to local municipal libraries instead. They rarely have Art, Design & Technology, Cookery or Sports facilities, as these take up space and are expensive. Instead they send pupils away on courses to study these areas of the curriculum.

### Run for Profit

75% of Sweden's 'Free' Schools are run for

***“Only the profit motive will drive the level of expansion and innovation that education services require”.***

Anders Hultin, Former chief executive of Kunskapsskolan, a chain Swedish 'Free' schools.

Kunskapsskolan run 30 schools in Sweden with an operating profit of SKr65 million. They have recently taken over their first Academy in Richmond.

profit.

This is achieved by the economies of scale described above, and by the use of untrained teachers.

The number of qualified teachers in independent schools is a little over 60% compared to 84% in public schools.

**Patrons:** Lord Roy Hattersley, Tony Benn, Fiona Millar, Professor Gus John, Michael Rosen, Alan Gibbons, Joan Sallis OBE  
**National Trade Union Affiliates:** TUC, NUT, NASUWT, ATL, UCU, UNISON, UNITE, GMB, FBU, MU, PCS

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The New Schools Network, a group set up by a former aide to Michael Gove, claim to have hundreds of parents groups clamouring to run their own schools. The New Schools Network will put them in touch with established education providers. One example is Lilac Sky Schools, which recently took over a special school in Somerset and whose Director of Education Services, Trevor Averre Beeson, says he is 'unashamedly working to be profitable' for his shareholders.

## Falling Standards

Per Thulberg, director general of the Swedish National Agency for Education, said the schools had "not led to better results" in Sweden.

He said: "*This competition between schools that was one of the reasons for introducing the new schools has not led to better results. The lesson is that it's not easy to find a way to continue school improvement. The students in the new schools have, in general, better standards, but it has to do with their parents and backgrounds. They come from well-educated families.*"

and "*We have had increasing segregation and decreasing results, so we can't say that increasing competition between schools has led to better results*".

## Increasing Segregation

One of the concerns that campaigners in Britain have about Academies and 'Free' Schools is the possibility of them leading to segregation. The Skolverket report says "*Several previous studies, and statistics, show that choice in the school system has led to a tendency to segregate in terms of pupils' sociocultural background, performance and ethnic background.*"

Ann-Christin Larsson, a senior officer at teaching union Lararforbundet spoke at a Seminar organised by the Anti Academies Alliance and the TUC in March 2010. She said

*"Independent schools have also created more segregation. Pupils attending these schools are from better off, more educated families. It's because they are more informed and they know how to work the system better."*

## Educational Comparisons

Two respected International bodies that measure student performance are PISA - Programme for International Student Assessment and TIMMS – Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study. Both compare scores, and progress across over 50 countries.

The most recent PISA report is from 2006 and the TIMMS report is from 2007.

### PISA ranking

Science		Maths	
Finland	1 <sup>st</sup>	Finland	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Netherlands	9 <sup>th</sup>	Netherlands	5 <sup>th</sup>
UK	14 <sup>th</sup>	Sweden	21 <sup>st</sup>
Sweden	22 <sup>nd</sup>	UK	24 <sup>th</sup>

### TIMMS ranking

Science		Maths	
England	5 <sup>th</sup>	England	7 <sup>th</sup>
USA	11 <sup>th</sup>	USA	9 <sup>th</sup>
Sweden	14 <sup>th</sup>	Sweden	15 <sup>th</sup>

Perhaps the most shocking figures released by TIMMS, considering that Michael Gove believes we should be copying the Swedish model, are the trends in average scores from 1995 to 2007

Science		Maths	
England	+8%	England	+16%
USA	+7%	USA	+16%
<b>Sweden</b>	<b>-42%</b>	<b>Sweden</b>	<b>-48%</b>

In most of the comparisons above Sweden is below the UK.

When it comes to trends, the Swedish system is significantly falling, where the British system has improved.

**Why do the Tory / Lib Dem government want to copy this?**