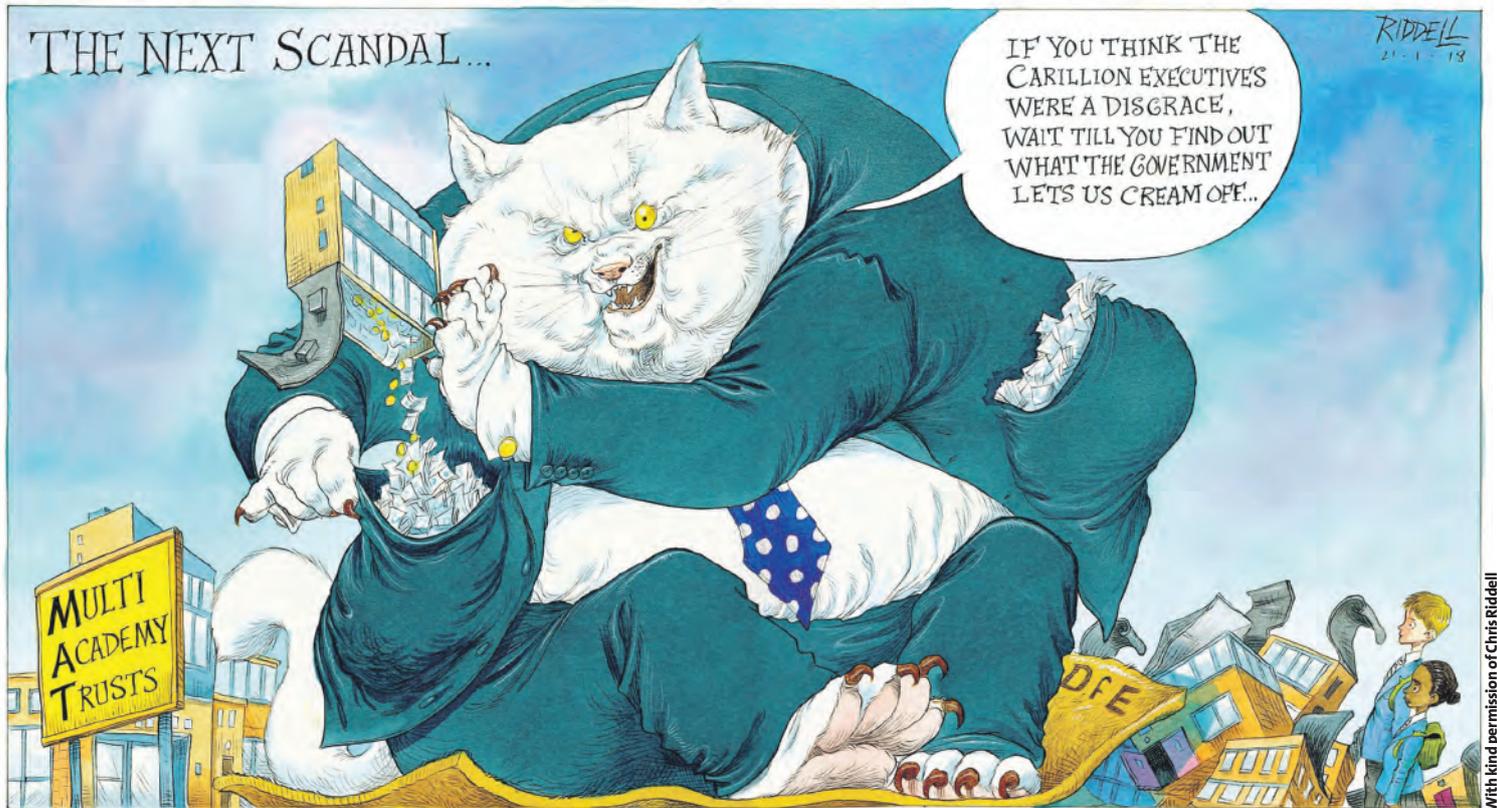


Anti Academies Alliance



"A good local school for every child"



Is the tide turning?

THE NUMBER OF applications for academy conversion fell last year. It is no surprise. The breadth and depth of the problems associated with academisation is astonishing. Rarely a day passes without a new scandal in academy land.

From fat cat pay to failing free schools, the idea that privatisation – or what Gove called the ‘supply side revolution’ – would solve the problems of education is risible.

But in truth, it is no laughing matter. The academies experiment has

caused havoc in many schools. That’s why the Anti Academies Alliance continues to campaign against it.



This leaflet is designed to help you to renew or take up anti academy campaigning. It may be another four years before a new government can use legislation to halt this academy madness. In the meantime, campaigning can stop schools converting. Even if campaigns are ultimately lost, they help lay the basis for change in the future. The AAA is funded to help you campaign. Please get in touch as soon as you hear of any school considering academisation.

Picture: Jess Hurd Report: Digital

Twitter: @antiacademies Facebook: Anti Academies Alliance Affiliate: <http://antiacademies.org.uk/affiliate>
Email: office@antiacademies.org.uk Website: www.antiacademies.org.uk

STEFAN SIMMS is the Divisional Secretary of Ealing Teachers Association in West London. The AAA spoke to Stefan about the successful campaigning against academisation that ETA has been involved in over the last year.

How many anti-academies campaigns has your association been involved in during the last 12 months?
Five.

How many did you win?
Four. They were all primary schools. The fifth was a secondary school which we lost. Ealing Local Authority backed the head teacher as they wanted to ensure a failed primary next door did not fall into the hands of a chain like ARK or Harris.

Whilst we lost, it was very close. There were one or two moments that might have swung it in our favour. Easy to say now in hindsight, but we could have avoided a few mistakes. It went to six days of strike action, but key union members left in the

summer and we underestimated the impact this would have in the autumn term.

In contrast, in the four primaries that we won, the Local Authority supported us by supplying MPs and Councillors for public meetings aimed at parents.

So what made the difference between winning and losing?

Two things: strike action and parental support. In the one we lost, we weren't successful in winning over sufficient parents. As I have already said, the support of the LA was also important too.

Why was parental involvement so important?

To give you an example. In one school we couldn't

“Strike action was the foundation. It was this that helped provide a focus for parents to rally round and support.”



Stefan Simms: “Members feel more emboldened when they see parental support.”

persuade members to strike but the parents were well organised. They organised petitions, a big lobby of governors, debates streamed via Facebook and other social media. This helped lift the confidence of our members to consider strike action.

But to be honest, strike action was the foundation of most campaigns. It was the strikes that helped provide a focus for parents to rally round and support.

We found it was best to do a public meeting in the run up to the strike; take strike action with parents on picket lines, and then use all of this for a bigger public meeting or lobby of governors. In primary schools, it is much easier to

reach parents and for parents to meet each other and do stunts when dropping off their children. In one school parents did a 10-minute chant outside the HT office with a mini student and parent strike with the press invited.

Calling for many days of strike action is also important as it keeps the pressure up and builds the parent campaign. Members feel more emboldened when they see parental support.

What do you think are most important first things to do to get a campaign up and running?

As soon as you hear that a school is considering conversion it means they have probably been actively

planning this for six months or more. Remember, as soon as schools request information from the DfE about conversion, the DfE consider it a done deal!

So move quickly; don't wait and assume the worst. Our first argument was that only the threat of strike action would stop academisation. We got help and advice from the AAA. We got reps from other schools that had successfully opposed academisation to speak at union meetings. We leafleted parents at the school gates and put adverts in local newspapers and social media adverts for public meetings that we were organising. We tried to identify a core of parents

who would run with the campaign.

What impact has anti-academies campaigning had on your association?

100% positive, even if we had lost. In the past, anti-academies campaigns have always helped build a new layer of reps and activists in the association. Win or lose, these campaigns get people involved and new activists emerge. Obviously success creates confidence, not just in the schools affected but right across the association. It makes the union more relevant and increases attendance at meetings. We have also made lots of parental contacts which we are now utilising for the campaign over funding.

What's wrong with academies?

- Academisation does not improve schools – LAs have a better record in school improvement.
- Academisation is politically sensitive – a new government may change the rules/system so conversion is inherently risky.
- Academisation is ‘forever’ – there is no way back to local democratic control
- Academisation is seen by business as an opportunity for

- investment – some chains use service level agreements to profit from their schools.
- Academisation leads to a loss of democracy – with no real consultation or the requirement for binding staff and parental ballots, governors can (and do) ignore the wishes of staff and parents.
- Academisation has resulted in many multi-academy trusts (MATs) having boards of trustees



that are unconnected to local schools and have no elected staff or parent representatives.

- Academisation leads to schools being vulnerable to ‘takeovers’ with no say for parents and staff.
- Academisation doesn't stop budget cuts – in fact, more academies are running up ‘overspends’ than local authority schools.

- Academisation is opposed by all the teacher trade unions and where changes in pay and conditions have been imposed there have been strikes and protests.
- Academisation means children are more likely to be ‘taught’ by unqualified staff.
- Academisation is more about playing politics with education



than improving our schools – billions has been spent on converting schools – this money has gone to legal advisors and consultants rather than children. It has been done because some politicians claim that



the creating a ‘free market of competing schools’ is a better way to provide education. All the evidence from education systems around the world suggests collaboration is more effective.

- Academisation has seen the emergence of greater inequality in education. One particular concern has been the growth of ‘fat cat’ salaries for heads

and CEOs of MATs. One CEO earns more than £500,000, but there are many earning more than £175,000 (the average head teacher pay in a secondary school is £80,000 to £120,000).

- Academisation has seen an increase in exclusion rates and worse provision for SEND pupils.
- All the evidence suggests that good

Academisation can be fought!

Newham, amongst others, has shown that resistance to academisation has not gone away! Parents, unions, campaigners and councillors have united to defend their schools.

schools are dependent on good staff delivering good teaching and learning with good leadership focused on supporting them – MATs are corporate bodies with leaderships that are often remote from supporting teaching and learning. They are too busy expanding the ‘business’ to focus on what really matters in the classroom.





exam factories underfunding privatisation testing corruption fragmentation free schools selection nepotism demoralisation

What do we want for our schools?

Resistance to academisation never went away and after what has happened at Carillion and the Wakefield City Academies Trust (WCAT), it is clear that something has to change.

Recent months have seen a sharp increase across the country in the number of strikes and campaigns against academisation – from schools in Cambridge, Brent, Warwickshire, Birmingham and Newham fighting any attempt to academise them, to schools in Wakefield, Barnsley, Manchester, Greenwich and Liverpool campaigning to bring their schools back under local democratic control.

In Newham, the council itself recently passed a motion

calling on a halt to academisation, for binding parental and staff ballots, for schools to remain with the local authority and for national terms and conditions for all staff in academies until such time that a government 'abolishes the academy system'.

Given this new situation, the AAA is renewing its efforts

to stop academy conversions. A fractured educational landscape confronts us, but every school saved now from academisation will make the task of sorting this mess out easier. We urge anyone to contact us if any school plans a conversion.

But it does not stop there. Hopefully a Corbyn-led Labour government will see

tackling this as a priority for the new National Education Service.

The question of the 'middle tier' must be central to any discussions about an NES, not only because the chaos caused by deregulation needs fixing but also because any hope of delivering real change and real social justice will require either a return to Local Authorities or some sort of elected and accountable local education authority.

We face an entrenched 'education ruling class' who have power and control over vast swathes of the education system. It will take a huge social movement of staff, parents and students to shift them.

Jeremy supports action against academisation

"I send my solidarity to you today on the Newham schools strike against academisation of Keir Hardie, Avenue and Cumberland schools. Our schools should be accountable to parents, staff and the whole community – and with Labour's National Education Service, they will be. Well done to parents, staff and their union taking a stand today for our children. They must be listened to."

JEREMY CORBYN, 22nd February



Picture: Geoff Dexter

New Zealand has done it, so should we

Earlier this year, New Zealand's Education Minister announced the end of 'charter schools' (NZ's equivalent of our academies), marking the conclusion of an initiative dubbed a 'failed, expensive experiment' by education unions.

The minister was clear that these schools, introduced in 2011 by a conservative coalition, were driven by 'ideology rather than evidence' and that 'the Government's strong view is that there is no place for them in the New Zealand system.'

Charter schools had been criticised by a wide range of educational authorities, teacher

organisations, the public and political parties.

The announcement was welcomed by the New Zealand Educational Institute and the Post Primary Teachers' Association after mounting resistance to the whole idea of

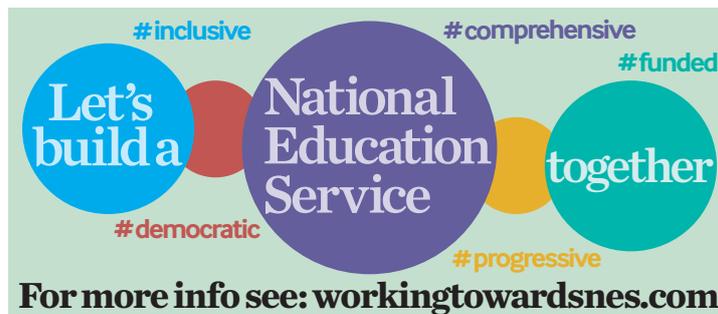
private publicly funded education.

The NZEI National Secretary was clear, 'Public schools can and do reflect the diversity in their communities and are responsive and accountable to them. Many public schools are

using the creativity of the New Zealand Curriculum far better than any charters. We don't need charter schools for innovation.'

The PPTA President welcomed the decision to remove these schools as a 'great day for public schools and their communities – PPTA members have been consistent and united against the corporate attack on our education system, ensuring that charters remained a contentious and divisive issue and never gained widespread acceptance.'

New Zealand has done it, so must we. Let's build a National Education Service together.



Please fill in and hand in to the AAA stall or post to: AAA, 7 Lower Cape, Warwick CV34 5DP

Please contact me so I/we can help the campaign We want to affiliate to the Anti Academies Alliance

Name/Organisation..... Postal address.....
Email.....
Phone number..... Post code.....