

Anti Academies Alliance



"A good local school for every child"



Don't let this government and their fat cat cronies destroy our education system

THE NUMBER OF applications for academy conversion may have fallen last year, but this is a policy far from having been jettisoned by the government and their fat cat friends. 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.

Academisation has normalised excessive salaries and incoherent structures and schools have been turned into personal fiefdoms where crackpot theories, draconian regimes and lucrative contracts for edu-businesses dominate. The system is abusive – teachers know this and increasingly parents and the wider public know it.

The traditional role of school leadership as 'leaders of teaching and learning' is being destroyed by greed and ideological intransigence. The academisers have imposed their will on school communities, disregarding parents, staff and local councils. At the behest of careerist politicians, they are attempting to privatise control of our education system.

This leaflet is designed to help you to renew or take up anti academy campaigning. Whatever the speculation of an early general election being called, in reality, it could be May 2022 before a new government can use legislation to halt this academy madness. In the meantime, campaigning can stop schools converting.

We have seen an increasing number of successful anti-academisation campaigns over the last year, but 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.

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

We spoke to CATHERINE HOLMES, a parent at Mackie Hill Junior and Infant School in Wakefield, where an academy order was revoked, to find out her experience of organising to fight for her local school.

“We knew we had a fantastic school with great staff and we weren’t going to let them take that away from us”

What was the initial reaction from the parents and community when Ofsted first judged Mackie Hill to be inadequate?

Initially we were very disappointed, but when we took a step back to think, we realised that it was actually a good thing, as it meant the problems that were actually there (mainly poor senior management), would have to be sorted out and that this was only going to improve things for our children.

Why did you decide to get a campaign up and running?

Because we knew that we had a fantastic school, with a great team of teaching and non-teaching staff who all cared very passionately

about educating our children, and we weren’t going to let them take that away from us.

What were the most important first things to do to get the campaign up and running?

The first thing was to establish a public group on Facebook, which we invited as many parents and members of the local community to join as possible. This was a platform for us to communicate our planned anti-academy events, publicise our petition, but it also gave the parents and the local community a place to voice their opinions, and also ask us (the campaign team) questions about the situation too.

The next important thing was to set up a ‘leadership team’. We chose people who had key strengths. One person was very good on legality and politics, someone was good at publicity, another was good at public relations.

The leadership team also set up their own ‘private’ Facebook group and I think it was very important to have this platform where strategies and actions could be discussed away from the general public, as we soon realised that there were members of the ‘opposition’ following our public Facebook group.

The next important thing was to get a petition up and running, and publicise it as much as possible. We used



Catherine: “Good communication created a great deal of support.”

the 38 Degrees site – which was very successful for us.

It was very important to seek advice from the Anti Academies Alliance (AAA) and also the local National Education Union (NEU) too (thank you Sally Kincaid and her team!), as they both offered us a great deal of support and advice through the whole process.

It’s been a long two-year battle, were there times you were pessimistic about winning?

Yes, there were times like that, especially when things were out of our control, like when we were waiting for Ofsted to reinspect. We knew that we had done everything we could. At this point we had it in writing from the RSC, Vicki Beer,

that we could apply to have the academy order revoked if the school was reinspected and found to be ‘good’, we knew that the school and our fabulous new Headteacher had done everything possible. We just needed Ofsted to come back. This was quite frustrating, but we knew that we had to keep fighting and we couldn’t lose hope that this would happen. And it did!

Why do you think your campaign was successful?

A good core leadership team. Good communication with the parents and local community, which created a great deal of support. Support from the AAA and the NEU. Having a drive to be successful and not giving

up, even when times looked bleak.

What would be your message to others who find themselves in the same situation that you faced back in January 2018?

Look to the AAA and local unions for support and advice. Establish good local support from both the parents and wider local community and have a platform (such as Facebook) where you can publicise things and discuss key events and issues.

Set up a core leadership team, and have a private platform where you can discuss ideas, strategies and what action to take next.

Look to key local people for publicity and support,

such as local councillors. Never give up hope!

How are you all feeling at the moment?

Amazing! Lots of hard work has paid off and we now get to stay under Local Authority control. One of the best things is that we get to keep our fantastic new Headteacher, Jayne Elliott, who has been the key to turning our little school around. The basics were there before she came. An excellent team of teaching and non-teaching staff, they had just been poorly managed.

Mrs Elliott came and was able to turn the caterpillars that were already there into beautiful butterflies through effective leadership and management.

What’s wrong with academisation and why we must put an end to it

- 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

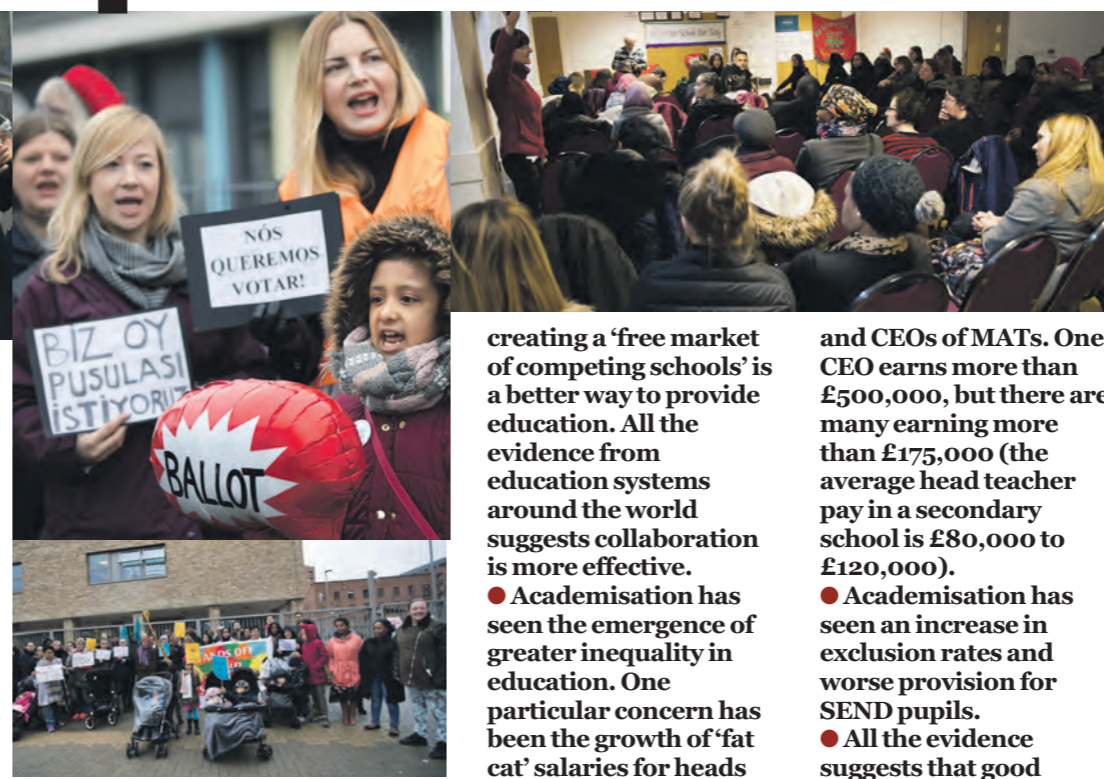


doesn’t stop budget cuts – in fact, more academies are running up ‘overspends’ than local authority schools.

- 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



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.

‘Academies have fewer freedoms than maintained schools’

The rapid conversion of state schools to academies since 2010 has resulted in the majority of such schools having less freedom than before, according to Professor Anne West of LSE, and Dr David Wolfe QC at Matrix. *Academies, the School System in England and a Vision for the Future* highlights the lack of transparency in the way academies are run.

In contrast to maintained schools, where decisions are taken by governors appointed through an open process, academies are run by ‘trustees’, whose opaque appointments are not subject to openness rules which apply across other areas of public life.

Download the report here: www.lse.ac.uk/social-policy/Assets/Documents/PDF/Research-reports/Academies-Vision-Report.pdf



Pictures: Jess Hurd Report Digital



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

What do we want for our schools?

Resistance to academisation has never gone away and seeing scandal after scandal envelop academy land, it is clear that something has to change.

The last period has seen campaigns against academisation in London, Norwich, Birmingham, Cambridge, Warwickshire, Bury, Preston, Northampton, Yorkshire, Redbridge, South Shields, Brighton, Weymouth, Chichester, Stevenage, Barnsley, Sussex, Bristol, Waltham Abbey, Sheffield, Wakefield, Kent, Greenwich, Lancashire... the list goes on.

In Newham, the council itself recently passed a motion calling on a halt to

academisation, 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 all this, the AAA continues to use 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. We must all engage in the debate about what a National Education Service



would look like.

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.

New Zealand has done it, so should we

In 2018, 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 get rid of academisation and build a National Education Service together.

Let's build a National Education Service together

- # inclusive
- # democratic
- # comprehensive
- # progressive
- # funded

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.....