

News from Tottenham

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Academy- another example of the 'emperor's new clothes' style of the naming of things and a far cry from Plato's place of higher learning dedicated to wisdom and philosophy; although it may well be that the new style 'academy' reflects other elements that hark back to 385 BC.¹

You may have heard that the current secretary of state for education wishes to force primary schools to become academies. It seems that the department which he heads, the department for education, is to start with primary schools in Tottenham, Haringey.² As if Tottenham hasn't had enough to contend with.

Following their Ofsted reports, at least 3, and possibly 5, Tottenham primary schools are faced with this draconian tactic.

It would seem that the schools are being made accountable for the inequalities of our society.

At the beginning of one of the reports it is acknowledged that:

Around 90% of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Approximately 30% of the pupils are of Black British, African or Caribbean heritage, and a quarter of the pupils are from families who have come to Britain from other European countries. Slightly over half of the pupils speak English as an additional language, with a high proportion at an early stage of learning this language. An above-average proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities and the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is well above average. Mobility is high, with relatively large numbers joining and leaving the school part-way through their primary education.

The school holds a variety of awards including Healthy School status and the Activemark.

Nightingale Primary School Ofsted report published 17th Nov 2011

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection-reports/find-inspection-report/provider/ELS/102126>

Yet, it seems, no link for understanding is being made by the department for education between this information and other knowledge which it holds. For

¹ E.g. A background of continuous warring, a ruling group that fosters the existence of an underclass and promotes inequality.

²

http://www.tottenhamjournal.co.uk/news/haringey_primary_schools_told_they_must_become_academies_1_1149035

example, it publishes reams of statistics (see one further example of this below) that demonstrate the relationship between achievement and social/economic conditions, yet continues to behave as if this is the fault of the schools.

There are very clear reasons for our children not being taught in the new style 'academy'. The NUT website outlines some of them very well and they are summarised below. Please see the NUT web page for the full document :

Reason one: Academies hand over state schools to sponsors

Reason two: Many sponsors are unsuitable

Reason three: Academies Threaten Fair Admissions Procedures

Reason four: Academies threaten teachers' pay and working conditions

Reason five: Academies do not offer pupils a better education than other local schools

Reason six: Academies undermine the independent role of school governors

Reason seven: Academies have a damaging impact on other neighbouring schools and on local authorities.

<http://www.teachers.org.uk/node/10584>

There is an emergency public meeting about this issue at Mon 9th January. I will keep you posted.

GCSE Attainment by Pupil Characteristics, in England 2008/09

Pupils whose first language was English performed better at the end of Key Stage 4 than pupils for whom English is an additional language –

51.0 percent of pupils with English as their first language achieved 5 or more A-C grade GCSEs or equivalent including English and mathematics compared to 47.7 percent for pupils for whom English is an additional language.*

54.2 of pupils not eligible for free school meals achieved 5 or more A-C grade GCSEs or equivalent including English and mathematics compared to 26.6 percent of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals - **an attainment gap of 27.6 percentage points.***

For all pupils with SEN, 16.5 percent achieved 5 or more A-C grade GCSEs or equivalent including English and mathematics. This compares to 61.3 percent for pupils with no identified SEN, **an attainment gap of 44.8 percentage points.***

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000900/index.shtml>

Sat 14th Jan

The public meeting was packed out. It took place in Downhills Primary School, which is one of the four which have:

until the 27th January to agree the change of status. If they do not comply (Gove) says he will abolish their boards of governors and replace them with unelected appointees.

<http://antiacademies.org.uk/2012/01/600-at-meeting-to-resist-forced-academies-in-haringey/>

The school hall was full, all seats taken and standing 4 deep at the back. The meeting was stirring – a strong feeling of determination from parents, teachers, and speakers. There was some varying opinion as to whether academies may or may not work for school improvement, but a strong feeling of unity on this matter – no school should be **forced** to become an academy.

For a report on the meeting you can follow the link to:

<http://antiacademies.org.uk/2012/01/600-at-meeting-to-resist-forced-academies-in-haringey/>

My own personal favourite contribution came from a maths teacher at the primary school. He told us of a meeting he had with representatives from Mr Gove's department. He was told by them that there had to be improvements, changes. He asked for advice, telling them that he would implement them the very next day if they could give him concrete helpful suggestions – he was met by averted eyes and a long pause - or, perhaps, an embarrassed silence.

On Thursday 12th Jan there was a debate in Parliament on the position of Downhills Primary School. If you have a few minutes, the account in Hansard makes for illuminating reading, particularly where Nick Gibb re-assures David Lammy that this is

not happening in Haringey alone

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201212/cmhansrd/cm120112/debtext/120112-0004.htm#12011294000004> .

The Save Downhills Campaign is gathering momentum. As well as the meeting and the parliamentary debate discussed above, they are also planning a demonstration for the 28th Jan.³ And David Lammy is prepared, alongside others, to take the whole anti-democratic process to a judicial review.

³ <http://antiacademies.org.uk/2012/01/save-downhills-campaign-week-of-action/>