

A Good Local School

CASE believes that all individuals are entitled to high quality and properly resourced education appropriate to developing their full potential, thereby fostering life long enjoyment of learning and enabling them to live free and fulfilling lives in a diverse, multicultural society. This is best achieved through democratic and locally accountable partnerships working in a spirit of mutual respect and co-operation.

Introduction

Recent Governments of all persuasions have been obsessed with offering choice in education. There is an ever growing and a very confusing list of different types of schools, especially at the secondary level. Currently, these are Community, Faith, Foundation, Specialist, City Technology College, Academy, Comprehensive, Grammar and Secondary Modern. There are other categories in the pipeline!

There is a growing concern that, in promoting the so-called merits of each new initiative, we may have lost sight of the key underlying principles which underpin a good school. This paper explores some of these issues and provides a frame of reference against which each of the different types of schools can be judged objectively.

Core Principles

CASE believes that all state-funded schools must be a force for equipping future generations with the knowledge and skills to enable them to live free and fulfilling lives in a tolerant and civilised society. We believe that a good local school should: -

- Be an integral part of the local community, fostering constantly evolving shared cultural values and aspirations.
- Be a place where all parents and pupils feel welcomed and valued, irrespective of their ability, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, social background and educational needs.
- Provide a happy, secure and supportive learning environment where pupils and parents feel cared for and respected as individuals and where diversity is celebrated.
- Provide a range of learning challenges necessary to help all pupils to become autonomous learners, who can arrive at their own view of the world, take control of their own lives and make their own choices as confident, responsible future citizens in a tolerant multicultural society.
- Meet the individual needs of all pupils through the full ability range in all its dimensions through a curriculum which has high expectations, encourages active learning, builds self-worth and engenders the love of learning for its own sake.
- Ensure fair and open access to all pupils and parents to a good inclusive local school using a transparent admissions process and without recourse to testing or selection.
- Include all children regardless of their special needs and circumstances.
- Provide a variety of teaching styles and learning experiences.
- Provide fully comprehensive education at all levels with a broad curriculum which values all aspects of education - academic, technical, vocational, physical and social - equally and which celebrates all achievement with equal esteem.
- Employ governance and management systems based on principles of local democratic accountability and a spirit of mutual respect, co-operation and partnership between parents, teachers, governors and the elected representatives of the local community.
- Be provided free at the point of delivery.



Campaign for State Education – Policy

Key Characteristics

Over the years schools have evolved a variety of ways to meet the aspirations of their pupils and parents. We believe that they share the following common characteristics: -

- 1) They are accountable to the local community and are a vital and vibrant focal point for it.
- 2) Their strong community links maximise benefits from local skills and resources.
- 3) They work in a spirit of mutual respect, co-operation and partnership with other local schools.
- 4) They work in partnership with, and within the strategic framework of their Local Authority for planning, monitoring and development, and as a champion for the rights of every pupil.
- 5) They have clearly a defined framework for governance and management which sets out the roles and responsibilities of all key stakeholders – the Local Authority, Governors, Head Teachers, staff, parents and pupils.
- 6) Their Governing Bodies are composed of balanced numbers of elected parents, teachers, support staff and representatives from the Local Authority and the local community.
- 7) Their parents work in partnership with the school through effective Home/ School Partnerships and their Parent Councils flourish across all year groups.
- 8) Their Head Teachers, senior staff and Governing Bodies provide effective leadership.
- 9) Their teachers have an effective voice at all levels of decision making processes.
- 10) Their teachers foster a love of learning through a variety of teaching styles and are themselves committed to their own continuing professional development.
- 11) Their school development plans are based on the principles of continual organic development.
- 12) They keep all aspects of school life under critical review.
- 13) They employ resources effectively to provide a high quality learning environ-

ment, including small class sizes, up-to-date books and equipment, well-designed, maintained and safe buildings.

- 14) They provide clear, relevant and timely information for parents and hold regular discussions about the progress of their children.
- 15) They have Student Councils which are allowed to contribute to improving the life of their school.
- 16) They champion an inclusive ethos and promote racial equality and respect for differences.
- 17) They respect the rights of parents, learners and staff and counter discrimination.
- 18) They celebrate success and offer positive reinforcement at all levels.
- 19) They provide equal access for all learners and provide appropriate support for those who need it.

How you can campaign

Review your local school(s) against the core principles and key characteristics outlined above with a view to identifying areas for development.

Work with the Governing Body and the local community to develop and implement a budgeted and timed action plan to ensure compliance with the core principles over a realistic timescale.

Work with your local Councillors, MPs and local common interest groups to promote the CASE model of A Good Local School.

Feedback on this document will be gratefully received. You can contact CASE by post

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Our website is:

www.campaignforstateeducation.org.uk

CASE has been campaigning on education issues for over 40 years and relies entirely on membership fees to fund its activities.