



Newsletter

News and Views from Campaign for State Education – South East London

Welcome to the 2nd edition of CASE – South East London. If you would like to share news or subscribe (unsubscribe) to the Newsletter, please e-mail : CASE-SEL@outlook.com. Information will be published anonymously, unless you give permission for your name to be used. For information about CASE and the author, please see the last page.

The State of Play in Education

It's still not pretty. Teachers and schools remain under pressure trying to keep up with new rules and requirements. Leaked exam papers, and exams that do not reflect the subject matter, add to the chaotic management of the education system by Ofqual and the Department for Education (DfE). Education funding will be cut by at least 8% (according to the council), and with the fairer funding proposal, is expected to hit London schools hardest, especially those schools that have PFI debt.

Nicky Morgan MP has put forward Amanda Spielman as her preferred choice to replace Sir Michael Wilshaw as Head of Ofsted. She is a co-founder of the multi academy trust, ARK, and leader of Ofqual – she has never been a teacher. Do we think she will protect our community schools, or simply promote the academy agenda of this government?

The Education White Paper - Educational Excellence Everywhere – and the “U-turn”

I imagine Nicky Morgan MP was taken aback by the strength of feeling from her own party to the government plans to force every school to become an academy. Whilst listening, she stated that the government continues to believe that every school should become an academy, however, only schools in local authorities that are considered “underperforming” or “unviable” will be forced to convert into an academy.

A new Education Bill will be drafted, to incorporate this proposal and other elements of the White Paper.

These terms have not yet been defined. We do not know whether the terms will be defined by secondary schools and primary schools separately, or combined.

However, if “**underperforming**” is defined as 70% or fewer pupils attending secondary schools rated Good or better, then this will impact 39 local authorities - 6 in London and the South-East - based on figures in Ofsted 2014-15 Annual Report. Lewisham falls into this category. If the definition is 60%, then this will only capture 16 local authorities (according to the Ofsted 2014-5 Annual report).

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The term “**unviable**” will define the local authorities who have more pupils in academy schools than LA maintained schools, and therefore, according to Nicky Morgan MP, the LA will not be able to sustain the level of service to LA maintained schools. If this is defined as 60% and more pupils attending secondary academy schools, this will affect 90 local authorities, including Bromley, Croydon, Kent, Southwark & Wandsworth.

Schools that are forced to convert into academies due to adverse Ofsted ratings will increase the number of pupils attending academy schools. It is therefore critical that our MPs identify MPs across the political spectrum, who will also be at risk of having their schools removed from their local authorities, to oppose the next Education Bill in this regard. Please encourage your MPs to oppose government plans.

Many Kent and London MPs have spoken in the recent debates in the House of Commons on education and fair funding. However, Lewisham MPs have not spoken in any of these debates (it is acknowledged that Heidi Alexander is constrained by her Front bench role) – **our MPs need to speak up.**

There is **cross party opposition** to forced academisation and to government plans to remove parents from the education landscape by the proposal to change the legal requirement for governing bodies to have minimum 2 parent governors i.e. to have no

parent governors. Nick Gibb MP, Minister of State for Schools, wrote, in a letter to me, on the White Paper: “*We want to provide a school-led system where every school is an academy and where pupils, parents and communities are empowered to have a more significant voice in schools..*”. I’m not convinced that a parent portal and a governing body that excludes parents, provides a significant voice for parents.

Since the White Paper was published the DfE has received more than 200 applications from schools choosing to become academy schools – the “jump before you’re pushed” approach. If this continues, the government will not need a Bill!

Note: Lewisham ranks 5th in England in the primary school performance table with 95% of pupils in schools rated good or better, and 2% of pupils in academy schools, which is why my analysis focuses on secondary schools.

Reminder: This is what the Conservative 2015 Manifesto said: “We will continue to allow all good schools to expand, whether they are maintained schools, academies, free schools or grammar schools.” The Government is acting beyond its mandate in forcing good schools to convert into an academy with its latest proposals.

The Regional School Commissioner

Regional School Commissioners (**RSC**) gained powers on 18th April to issue Academy Orders to local authority (**LA**) maintained schools, if the schools are inadequate or otherwise “Causing Concern” or if the school falls into the “Coasting” definition. The latter will not apply until performance data is published in Autumn.

Our RSC, Dominic Herrington, has already been exercising these powers and has issued an Academy Order to Sedgemoor School. As the RSC publishes its

meeting minutes 3 months after the meeting, we do not yet have a clear picture of other schools affected.

Note that the requirement to consult parents in relation to forced academisation was removed under the Education & Adoption Act 2016.

The RSC will decide which Academy Sponsor to appoint to sponsor the school. Parents will simply be informed by the Academy Sponsor what their improvement plans are.

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Government Plans / Interaction

Inquiry into Multi Academy Trusts

The Education Select Committee is a parliamentary committee chaired by Neil Carmichael MP. The Select Committee launched an inquiry into Multi Academy Trusts (**MATs**) on 18th March. Two parents from Lewisham have separately submitted written evidence.

Sir Michael Wilshaw (Head of Ofsted) and Sir David Walker (School Commissioner) both gave evidence to the Committee on 15th June. They were both in

agreement that there are MATs not performing well enough, and those that are not performing well enough will not be permitted to expand. Sir David Walker is to subsequently provide written evidence to explain the criteria for assessing when a MAT is not performing well enough, and whether it can expand.

Inquiry into DfE Financial Mismanagement (you couldn't make this up)

The DfE used a statutory instrument to extend the statutory deadline for laying its financial accounts before Parliament to 29 April 2016 (from 31st January). Not only could the DfE not submit its financial accounts on time, but Sir Amyas Morse, the National Audit Office's (NAO) Comptroller and Auditor General, issued an 'adverse opinion' on the DfE's group financial statements:

"Providing Parliament with a clear view of academy trusts' spending is a vital part of the Department for Education's work – yet it is failing to do this. As a result, I have today provided an adverse opinion on the truth and fairness of its financial statements. The Department will have to work hard in the coming months, if it is to present Parliament with a better picture of academy trusts' spending through the planned new Sector Account in 2017."

Neil Carmichael MP, Chair of the Education Committee was not impressed:

"Government departments have ten months to get their accounts in order and laid before Parliament for proper public scrutiny, and most manage with far less. Slipping out a statutory instrument to extend the deadline on the last possible day is further evidence of DfE's struggle to get its act together on financial matters."

The Committee agreed in December to invite the Permanent Secretary to explain the Department's plans for academy accounts. Today's events leave us with no alternative but to consider the wider question of financial management at the DfE."

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Fairer Funding

London schools have received higher education funding per pupil – see the table for the 2015-16 and 2016-17 funding per pupil in SE London and Kent LAs. The City of London receives the highest amount per pupil in the country (and also has the lowest number of pupils). The lowest amount of funding per pupil is around £4,100. If the government plans to give schools an equal and flat rate, i.e. £5,000 per pupil, London local authorities will lose out.

Note that London and Kent MPs, from all parties, have been urging the government to fund schools based on pupil needs, rather than a flat rate. Any cuts to funding per pupil will be on top of existing education funding cuts, which are either forcing schools to run budget deficits or to cut resources to remain within budget.

Source: DfE data on funding per pupil.

Local Authority – SE London & Kent	2015/16 Funding per pupil	2016/17 Funding per pupil
City of London (highest)	£8,587	£8,587
Lambeth	£6,377	£6,486
Southwark	£6,116	£6,463
Greenwich	£5,998	£6,020
Lewisham	£5,943	£5,966
Haringey	£5,871	£5,913
Wandsworth	£5,574	£5,602
Bexley	£4,606	£4,635
Kingston upon Thames	£4,594	£4,594
Croydon	£4,829	£4,856
Medway	£4,358	£4,358
Bromley	£4,545	£4,548
Kent	£4,360	£4,383

Local Education News

Lewisham Education Commission & Report

In December 2015, the Mayor of Lewisham approved the appointment of an Education Commission, headed by Christine Gilbert, to provide the council with views on how to improve the performance of its secondary schools. Lewisham has languished at the bottom of all secondary school performance tables since 2010. This has resulted in the RSC taking an unwelcome interest in Lewisham schools.

The report was published in April and made public at the beginning of June.

<http://councilmeetings.lewisham.gov.uk/documents/s43917/04Lewisham%20Education%20Commission%20Report.pdf>

I was invited by the CYP Select Committee to address the Committee on the Report. I indicated that there

were elements of the report I agreed with, such as schools working together, working with teaching alliances and education charities (it invites the question “why this hasn’t already occurred?”).

On the parent voice, I do not think the report went far enough. Apparently, there are at least 10 head teachers who want to convert their schools into academies – one standalone, the others by creating MATs. I believe that this should only occur if teachers and parents are in agreement, not just head teachers and the governing body.

The Report encourages the council to support these schools to convert into so-called “Home Grown MATs” and to also invite Free Schools into the borough to meet demand for school places.

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The Report offers views on a Lewisham Partnership and creating a Lewisham Secondary Challenge, similar to the London Challenge, to stimulate improvements in secondary schools' performance. The Report also states that improvement will take 4 years - I don't believe the RSC will wait that long.

The Report will be considered at a full council meeting on 20th July, and the decisions made there, will be considered further by the CYP Select Committee.

Sadly, I believe that Lewisham Council has reacted too late to protect our secondary schools; it has failed in its duty to secure improvement in secondary schools' performance. The Council is now a passive bystander in relation to Sedgehill School, following its messy intervention in 2014. Unfortunately, I do not believe that Sedgehill School will be the last school in Lewisham to receive an unwelcome Academy Order.

Our Schools

Sedgehill School

A negative Ofsted report was published in May following the Ofsted inspection in February. The IEB submitted a letter of complaint to Ofsted; a response to which has not yet been received. The Academy Order was issued on 25th May 2016, but the school leadership did not consider it necessary to tell parents (it wasn't news), and the LA failed to do so, despite an assurance that it would ensure parents were made aware.

Parents have been left in the dark wondering what is going to happen to our school. The Council tells parents it knows nothing, hears nothing and influences nothing – what an appalling state to be in. So, parents have had to take matters in their own hands, as the Council has not been a champion for parents.

Whilst Heidi Alexander MP is constrained by her front bench role as to what she can speak about in parliament, she is willing (and has already) taken parents' concerns on board and has communicated with Nicky Morgan MP. Heidi has also requested a meeting with the RSC, Dominic Herrington, about Sedgehill School, to which he has agreed.

Parents have written to Ofsted to express their views of the strengths of the school and improvements that have been made - a holding response has been received. Parents have also offered to meet the RSC Project lead to explain what parents value about the school and wish to be retained (such as the partnerships with Fulham FC and MiSST), as the Council's plan to conduct a survey of parents views has not materialized.

We understand that discussions with a MAT are focused on the financial situation of the school – the deficit and PFI debt. A MAT must be found and advised before the end of term, and there is a view that a "shadow" academy will be created i.e. a change of name, whilst formalities, such as transferring staff under TUPE process, are finalized.

A sponsor may wish to change the name of the school to reflect the MAT i.e. ARK Sedgehill School. It is important that existing parents are not forced to undertake an expensive re-fitting of school uniform, unless and until children have out-grown existing uniform. The DfE has published best practice guidance on school uniform for all schools which is available at www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-uniform.

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The Guidance recommends governing bodies (or the academy trusts) consider the timeframe for introducing a new uniform policy or amending an existing one, taking into account the views of parents and pupils on significant changes to the school uniform policy. **We must hold the MAT to this;** many Lewisham parents will not be able to afford to buy another brand school uniform. Hopefully, our children can continue to wear black or dark blue coats.

A Y7 Pupil’s View of Sedgehill School

“Sedgehill School is a good school. Sure, it has its ups and downs, but all the same it’s a good school and shouldn’t suffer change. A good side is the fact that the facilities are great; great library, great classes, great equipment and, believe it or not, great teachers.

Down sides are the odd scuffle in the playground, but teachers are on the scene very quickly to stop the incident. I personally think that Sedgehill should not be turned into an academy just yet. Judge us in a few years’ time and let us surprise you. So Ofsted give the school a little more time and we’ll show you what Sedgehill can achieve.”

Lewisham Education Partnership Code

As the school landscape is set to change, with more academies and free schools, I think it is Imperative that an Education Partnership Code is written applying to all education stakeholders to set out at high level the interaction, ethics and values amongst and between all

education stakeholders to ensure all stakeholders are recognized and valued in the education chain. We value transparency and accountability and wish all of our schools to work together, regardless of structure, for the benefit of our children.

Lewisham Schools Ofsted Inspections & Reports

Month	School	Previous Rating	New Rating
April 2016	Kender Primary School	Good	Good
May 2016	Deptford Green	Requires Improvement	Requires Improvement
May 2016	Sedgehill School	Requires Improvement	Inadequate
June 2016	St Matthews Academy	Good	?

New Parent Groups

Kent Education Network – by Jo Bartley

This is a new community campaign group lobbying for fair and excellent education in Kent. The group's aims include ending the eleven-plus and campaigning for access to good schools for all Kent children. Our aim as a new group is to look out for the children dismissed by Kent's system with a test at eleven. These children have less opportunity of attending a good school, and we feel our county's education system is unfair and produces worse results than many other counties. The best schools in Kent should be capable of educating any child successfully. Kent Education Network has launched a new web site setting out its aims and to seek new members. It can be found at <http://kenteducationnetwork.org/>. Good Luck to this new group – please share your stories with us!

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Lewisham Borough-wide Parent Education Network Group - ENGage

At the beginning of the year, I had a vision for a borough-wide parent group to share education information, support each other and our schools. I tested out the idea with a few parents, who have also canvassed opinion, and there is support amongst many parents across the borough. I therefore approached my MP, Heidi Alexander, to ask for her support.

Heidi has agreed in principle to support and host a borough-wide meeting of education stakeholders, primarily focussed at creating a strong, constructive voice for parents. The meeting will focus on supporting all Lewisham schools. She suggested that

Christine Gilbert should be approached to present her report, and that other speakers could include the Cabinet CYP Councillor. Heidi suggested a Thursday evening in July before the schools break up. It is likely to be held in the Civic Suite.

The event will require careful co-ordination and promotion, and parents have offered to help with the logistics with support from Heidi's office. Heidi will also be discussing this with the other Lewisham MPs. Parents want a formal voice in relation to education and our schools. – we want a seat at the table.

Academy Watch

Aside from plans to create a new all-through school in New Cross called [The Citizen School](http://www.citizenschool.org.uk) (www.citizenschool.org.uk), the [Southward Diocese Education Board](http://www.southwarddiocese.org.uk) plans to build a new CofE secondary school in South Lewisham, specialising in Maths & Modern Foreign Languages as well as a link for students with Autism. It is planned that the first Y7 8-form entry intake will be in September 2018. To register or show support for the plans, visit www.lewishamcofeseondaryschool.org.uk.

Underperforming MATs

These **MATs** are not considered by the Ofsted Head, Sir Michael Wilshaw to be performing well enough. Between them they are responsible for educating thousands of children. **School Partnership Trust Academies (SPTA), E-ACT, AET, The Education Fellowship, Wakefield City Academies Trust, CfBT Multi-Academy Trust, Collaborative Academies Trust, Oasis Learning Multi-Academy Trust.** We don't want these MATs in Lewisham.

What is CASE?

The Campaign for State Education has been a grass-roots, non-party political organisation since the 1960s. We believe that a good education is the right of all citizens and that this is best achieved through a comprehensive education system. We oppose segregation by '11-plus' or through covert means of selection.

What are we trying to achieve?

A properly funded, non-selective and locally democratically accountable school system that allows every child and young person to achieve their full potential. Visit the website: www.campaignforstateeducation.org.uk

About the Author

My name is Nicky Dixon, and I live in Lewisham with my family. My children attend Lewisham schools. I joined CASE NEC in September 2015 as I wanted to be part of a campaign group trying to protect our national education system.

I decided to create this Newsletter to share information with parents about government plans and news of our schools. My aim is to create monthly newsletters with sections on Government Developments / Local schools / Academy Watch. I welcome contribution.

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