



briefCASE

from Campaign for State Education

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ACADEMIES BILL BATTLE

CASE is playing its part in the struggle over the Coalition Government's Academies Bill, arguing over the principles and the detail. We are working through those MPs prepared to work with us.

THE CONCERNS WE HAVE RAISED

1) Creating a new, unaccountable education sector and diminishing the rights of parents

- Academies don't have to comply with most education law or the Freedom of Information Act, so parents and children have few rights.
- No requirement for governors to consult parents, staff or pupils or the wider community before deciding to become an academy.
- Exchanging a Governing Body that represents parents, staff and community for unaccountable directors of a 'company limited by guarantee'.

2) Doing so at the expense of other schools

- Taking money from local authorities which they use to support other schools.
- Incurring costs of £530 million for the transfer, according to the Government's own Impact Assessment which accompanies the Bill.

3) Damaging the interests of vulnerable children

- Increasing the likelihood that the most vulnerable children will be excluded (academies exclude more pupils than other schools).

4) Taking unnecessary risks with our future

- There is no evidence that Academies justify the vastly increased cost - only 22% of those most recently inspected were rated 'outstanding' by OfSTED.
- The proposals will overload the Department for Education's capacity to cope (the Impact Assessment reckoned only 200 schools a year could be handled).

5) Privatising a large part of the education system

- Because academies are 'independent' schools, this initiative effectively takes them out of the state sector - though still funded by taxpayers.

PRESSING AMENDMENTS

CASE is trying to amend the legislation as follows:-

- Make academies "public authorities", which are subject to the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010, giving parents, pupils and staff the same protection of the law as other schools.
- To require them to admit children with special educational needs like other maintained schools.
- To follow the same rules on the admission and exclusion of pupils, including appeals processes.
- Ensure that the governing body comprises at least 25% people elected by the parents of pupils and 25% elected by the staff.

PROPER CONSULTATION

CASE believes it would be wrong for governors to make a decision without consulting their stakeholders - parents, pupils, staff, trade unions and other local schools that might be affected. We are pressing that this should be over a period of at least 6 weeks during term time and that any governing body must answer these questions:

- Who will replace the governing body as "directors of the new company"?
- How will the curriculum change?
- What will be the arrangements for admissions, pupil discipline, exclusions and complaints?
- How special educational needs will be met?
- What additional money (if any) will be available to the school?
- What extra obligations go with becoming an Academy?
- Will anyone be allowed to make a profit from the academy?
- What happens if the academy is unsuccessful?