



TO MEMBERS WORKING IN SCHOOLS INTERESTED IN ACADEMY STATUS

Dear Member

We understand that your school might be interested in converting to academy status. You will be concerned about what academy status might mean for you, your colleagues and your school. Your headteacher and/or governors may believe that it is the appropriate way forward for you all, but the school staff unions urge you all to ask the headteacher and the governing body to think again. See the unions' 'frequently asked questions' factsheet for details.

Once a school becomes an academy this cannot be reversed, so it is important to be absolutely sure it is the best thing for the long term, not just the next 12 months. Whatever assurances your current headteacher may give, who knows what might happen when a new headteacher arrives?

Academy status will have serious ramifications for you and your colleagues, putting at risk much that union members have negotiated in recent years: guaranteed planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time, removal of administrative tasks from teacher duties, national pay and conditions for all staff, limits on working time, and continuing professional development (CPD) entitlements. The Government has told schools that are considering academy status that they should withdraw from the School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document, which regulates teachers' salaries.

Schools cannot function effectively in isolation. A fragmented system of academies will prevent us ensuring that every child gets fair access and a fair chance.

For more disadvantaged and vulnerable children, including those with special educational needs (SEN), there are real risks that the loss of local authority support around a whole range of special needs would hold back their achievements and inhibit their life chances.

What you should do:

- Approach your local union representative and ask them to convene an urgent union meeting so that colleagues can discuss the situation and how to defend your terms and conditions.
- In the union meeting, seek agreement to write to your governors raising concerns about academy status. The joint unions have prepared a letter for you to use.
- Ask your local representative to confirm with the headteacher how the school will consult with unions, parents and the local community before any decisions are taken.
- If your governing body is meeting to vote on academy status, or has already voted to make the switch, contact your union urgently for further advice. Whatever the intention, please ask your representative to let the union know what the situation is in your school.
- Share with colleagues the joint union FAQs for staff outlining the risks of switching to academy status.

Academy status means that your union is more important than ever. Whilst TUPE legislation preserves the terms and conditions of existing staff on the day the academy opens, that protection is not for perpetuity and does not apply to new members of staff. Members in existing academies have found that what matters is strong and united union membership and the presence of union representatives in the school, backed up by advice and support from union professionals.

Yours sincerely

Mary Bousted
ATL General Secretary

Paul Kenny
GMB General Secretary

Chris Keates
NASUWT General Secretary

Christine Blower
NUT General Secretary

Dave Prentis
UNISON General Secretary

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Unite General Secretaries