



# Newsletter



## ACADEMISATION IN BRADFORD

**The speed with which academisation is taking over Bradford schools is very striking.** Of Bradford's 200 schools, nearly half are either academies or "in the pipeline". This has not been a path that many schools would have chosen for themselves. Schools are bullied, cajoled or forced into changing their status. Many good educators, who care about the outcomes for their children, have been persuaded that they have to do this. It does not mean, however, that the overall impact of the change will be good.

### Some things are unquestionably being lost:

1. Democratic accountability. Schools become accountable to their Trusts, sometimes hundreds of miles away, rather than to local communities through the local Council. Academies can dispense with teachers, parents and local councilors from their governing bodies, and some do.
2. Financial accountability. The vast majority of those running schools are neither dishonest or greedy, but those who are have a much easier ride to helping

themselves to public money meant to be spent on children's education with the inadequate scrutiny of academy finances. We have one of the starkest examples in Bradford. It is right that those involved are now in prison, but wrong that it took whistle blowers and union people scouring accounts at Companies House to expose the fraud and insist that it was dealt with.

3. The guarantee of a good local school for every child. Parents are told that they must take their chances in a schools' market, where it may be that no one wants the children in the postcode in which they live, and no one has to take them. Any area-wide system of place planning and catchment areas has gone out of the window.
4. Any certainty that there will be enough properly trained teachers. The function of providing the supply is increasingly being delegated to organisations that aren't designed or monitored to fulfil overall needs.

5. Any certainty for school staff about their pay and conditions. Academies do not have to follow national or authority-wide agreements and standards. Most still do, but some don't. Even though they are funded by public money, they do not even have to recognize the right of staff to have unions bargain on their behalf or represent them collectively. We have one growing chain in Bradford – Dixons – that refuses to do so.

## OUR JOB, AS YOUR UNION, IS THREEFOLD

- a. To question what is happening and challenge what you believe to be wrong
- b. To seek to change it to something better
- c. To protect your interests, and those of the children and communities in which we work, in the situation in which we find ourselves

Your local officers are doing this to the best of our ability. We will all be more likely to succeed if more of you come forward to be active in the Union by being school reps, active members of the branch and campaigners for good education.

Join the NUT, the largest teachers' union. Just ring the Joining Hotline on

0845300 1669 or 020 7380 6369

Bradford NUT, 22 Edmund Street, Bradford BD5 0BH Tel: 01274 414664 / Fax: 01274 414665

Email: [contact@bradfordnut.org](mailto:contact@bradfordnut.org)

Web: [www.bradfordnut.org](http://www.bradfordnut.org)

## WHEN IS A SYSTEM NOT A SYSTEM?

The answer in the case of Bradford Education is when we are exposed to the free-for-all of market forces. One new example of this is the emergence of proposals by two providers – the Dixons chain and New College Pontefract – to open Sixth Form Colleges in Bradford. Where will they get their students from? Will they have selective admissions, seeking to cream off the brightest children from other schools, threatening the viability of their Sixth Forms without being a full replacement for them? Will they have catchment areas? No one seems to know. We do not want institutions that look after themselves and leave other schools, trying just as hard to educate children, to fail.

In the same announcement of new free schools came the news that Bradford will get a fourth all-girls school. It now has no all-boys schools. What consultation was there about this? What will its impact be on the very skewed intakes of some of its schools that are supposed to be co-educational?

Our local councillors need to take action to prevent chaos that will build up some schools by dragging down others.

We need a public debate on what is happening, as well as challenging any grammar school initiatives likely to damage even further the objective of a good education for every child

## A BIGGER AND BETTER UNION

The NUT in its current form may soon be no more! Conferences will take place on November 5<sup>th</sup>. If they agree to proposals to be put to them, members of NUT and ATL will be balloted on the creation of a new union to be called the “**National Education Union**” early in the New Year. Bradford NUT members at our last meeting gave a big welcome to this. Changed times mean that we cannot afford the luxury of a mass of competing unions in education. The new organization would have a big majority of all teachers in membership nationally and in Bradford, and would seek to grow by more amalgamations.

## “It’s time for SATs to go” say parents and teachers

**“Not everything that can be counted counts, Not everything that counts can be counted.”**

The quote above neatly describes the stranglehold the current system of assessment and accountability has on primary schools and teachers.

For over twenty years SATs have been used as the means of assessing children’s attainment **and** making schools accountable.

In that time they have instilled a climate of fear in schools, choked the curriculum and created a distorted view of what teaching, learning and achievement should look like.

Anyone with a passing interest can see that the system is broken and that we now have a set-up which is only meeting the needs of the tests rather than the needs of the child. **Our children, teachers and schools desperately need an alternative.**

### 2016 chaos highlighted the problems

The problems with the 2016 tests were manifold and the chaos and confusion highlighted the problems in the current system. In 2016 we saw the absurdity of:

- A government minister writing to schools twice to explain the government’s view on the use of exclamation marks!
- Crazy, eleven year old children needing to identify, and use, a “Fronted Adverbial”
- Contradictory advice being issued on teacher assessment
- Almost 50% of children about to start secondary school being told they are not at the “expected standard”

## November 8th – 2 important meetings

4.30pm for 5 – our General Meeting at The International Restaurant, Morley Street, Bradford

7pm – planning meeting to Resist Grammar Schools and Selective Education in Bradford – Committee Room 1, Bradford City Hall.

Such was the level of concern this year that parent groups have been set up to campaign for change and almost 30,000 children were kept home from school on May 3<sup>rd</sup> as a sign of protest.

## NUT BUILDING ALLIANCES IN OPPOSITION TO SATS

Following everything that happened this year there is an opportunity to campaign for change. The NUT is now part of an impressive alliance, *More Than A Score*, which includes the ATL, education experts and campaigners and parent groups all seeking to do this. This will be launched in the week beginning October 17<sup>th</sup>.

We are also working with the NAHT on a ballot of members in the **leadership group** for a boycott of SATs in 2017 unless the government commit to some fundamental changes, including an independent and expert review of the system. This will start with an "**indicative ballot**" this term to gauge members' views.

This is a priority campaign for the NUT, which we want to build in schools and with parents. There will be opportunities for you to get involved and give your input – please look out for more details.

**PARLIAMENTARY  
INQUIRY • HAVE  
YOUR SAY**

In response to the growing concerns the Parliamentary Select Committee has opened an inquiry into primary assessment.

This is a great opportunity for all teachers and parents to make their views known.

**Go to the "Primary assessment" page on the NUT website <https://www.teachers.org.uk/campaigns/primary-assessment/> for details of how to respond – closing date is October 28<sup>th</sup>.**

