



## **BRIEFING FOR SCHOOL GOVERNORS ON ACADEMIES BILL**

Michael Gove, the Secretary of State for Education, has written to all headteachers in England inviting them to register their interest in transferring their school to academy status.

Some headteachers and schools may believe that becoming an academy would provide them with greater freedom, less bureaucracy and more financial advantages. However, the reality is very different.

For individual schools, whilst initially there may be an increase in the school's budgetary allocation, the reality is that any additional money would need to be offset against the additional cost to schools of paying for services no longer provided by local authorities because of the reallocation of funding to the school. As an academy school, the local authority would be under no obligation to provide you with the support services currently available to you, including governor information and support, financial services, audit, school improvement, advice on health and safety regulations, legal advice, representation and employment support. Your school would need to consider how it would access such support in future and contend with having to access such services at a much higher cost.

The Government claims that becoming an academy school will lead to reduced bureaucratic burdens on headteachers and teachers. This is a fallacy. Moreover, the reality for already hard-pressed governing bodies is that becoming an academy school will drastically increase the bureaucratic burdens on volunteer school governors as they undertake a raft of statutory functions that previously were discharged on behalf of the school by the local authority or other relevant body. Independence for academy schools, therefore, comes at a price and could add to and compound the existing difficulties faced by schools in finding people to serve on the governing body.

There is also no evidence of a public clamour for the creation of new academy schools. Schools that choose to become an academy could find they come into conflict with parents and the local community, the vast majority of whom do not support the creation of academy schools. Indeed, a recent public opinion survey conducted by Ipsos MORI found that 96% of parents did not want state-funded schools to be run as academies.

A decision to become an academy school would also mean:

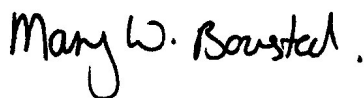
- no certainty that your governing body in its current form would continue. Previous experience from the existing 200 academies has shown that the majority of members of the governing body before the school became an academy (particularly parent governors) have been replaced by unelected corporate and business sponsors;
- your school having to raise additional money in order to enable future investment in developing or expanding your school site and for any other capital projects. You should be aware that the Government has not given any assurances about how recurrent capital costs of any new academy schools would be paid for;
- no guarantee on future revenue funding. No guarantee has been given to any school beyond March 2011. In a harsher public spending context, a new academy school would need to ensure that it could remain financially solvent and self-sufficient. Your school, if it became an academy, would not be able to rely on support from the local authority if circumstances beyond your control were to change (e.g. changing demographic trends);

- there would be no protection for the governing body if your school encountered a future financial overspend or budget deficit. Currently, all local authorities have statutory powers that enable them to provide financial support to schools in financial difficulty. Such support would no longer be available and, moreover, individual governors might not be fully indemnified against any financial liability or loss arising from a failure of the school's provision.

We believe that these are major risks that no governing body should take lightly. We also believe that schools work best when they work together, collaboratively, rather than in competition with each other. Indeed, thousands of schools judged by Ofsted as 'good' and 'outstanding' have achieved this high status without the need to become an academy.

We hope that you will agree that the Government's invitation to all primary, special and secondary schools to transfer to academy status is a complete distraction at a time when schools want to focus on delivering high educational standards and when the future financial position of schools, local authorities and other public services is so uncertain.

If you would like further information about any of the issues raised in this briefing or would like someone from our organisations to meet with you or your governing body, please contact us on the e-mail addresses below.



Mary Boustead  
**ATL General Secretary**  
communications@atl.org.uk



Chris Keates  
**NASUWT General Secretary**  
nasuwt@mail.nasuwt.org.uk



Christine Blower  
**NUT General Secretary**  
academies@nut.org.uk