

OUR
SCHOOLS
ARE NOT
FOR SALE

WHAT
PRICE
NEW
SCHOOLS?



PRIVATE SECTOR TO TAKE CONTROL PROVIDING NEW SCHOOLS

Building Schools for the Future is a new government programme to renew secondary schools. Spending will increase to £2.2 billion by 2005/06 by a mixture of Private Finance Initiative (PFI) and direct public investment.

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There is no doubt new and remodelled schools are badly needed and there is enormous scope to combine community, health and leisure facilities with schools.

But, the Government's Building Schools for the Future programme means a new privately run Local Education Partnership Company has to be set up

- 80% controlled by the private sector
- 10% by 'Partnerships for Schools' - a new government quango
- 10% by the local council.

It is clear this private Company could eventually rival the Local Education Authority.

The Potential Damage

Although Building Shools for the Future will provide much needed improvements to school buildings, it could have wider and potentially damaging implications.

- The run down of the Local Education Authority with it being replaced by the Local Education Partnership that will be 80% controlled by the private sector.
- The erosion of democratic accountability for education policy and provision.
- The privatisation of educational support services.
- The increased private provision of public education through City Academies.
- More and more teachers being employed by private firms.
- Inadequate and costly community facilities in schools.
- The education services increasingly determined by market forces and private profit-making.

MORE THAN JUST NEW BUILDINGS

The Buildings Schools for the Future programme is not just about bricks and mortar. It also has a direct effect on education policy. The programme demands that the Local Education Authority must review its educational vision - in full.

Also, the Education Authority must develop a strategy for providing education that integrates a building programme with service delivery and teaching as well as with school management and community use.

Building Schools for the Future is therefore designed to have an educational impact.

Tyne and Wear Councils First Wave

| Council | Schools | Value |
|----------------|---------|-------|
| Newcastle | 11 | £140m |
| Gateshead | 2 | £36m |
| South Tyneside | 8 | £136m |
| Sunderland | 17 | £185m |
| Total | 38 | £497m |

DECISION TIME VERY SOON

In the next few weeks local authorities will be making crucial decisions about the future of education in their areas. Here are some of the issues to be discussed.

- Whether the privately controlled Local Education Partnership Company is responsible only for secondary schools which are receiving Building Schools for the Future investment or whether it should be responsible for all secondary schools.
- Whether a City Academy will be included in the Building Schools for the Future plan.
- Whether new or refurbished school buildings will be financed directly by the authority or by the Private Finance Initiative (PFI)
- Whether the privately controlled Local Education Partnership Company will be responsible for the primary schools that feed the secondary schools that they control.
- Whether the Local Education Authority continues to provide educational support services directly itself or whether these services are outsourced to the privately controlled Local Education Partnership Company.
- Whether facilities management services such as school meals, school cleaning, building repairs and maintenance are provided by the Council or whether these services are outsourced to the privately controlled Local Education Partnership Company.
- Whether the local authority carries out a full assessment of community needs and priorities or whether it relies on existing information without any further community participation or involvement.
- Whether a Strategic Partnership Board consisting of representatives from trade unions, community organisations, schools, the Council, Learning and Skills Council and other educational organisations has a role in these decisions or whether they will be made by council officers and rubber stamped by elected members.

SCHOOLS TO BECOME BUSINESSES

The Building Schools for the Future programme will mean that most schools will be PFI schools - the private sector will design, build, finance and manage or operate schools for between 25 and 30 years.

There is clear evidence that PFI can mean delays and disruption as happened in North Tyneside. Plus of course the cost increases have led to cuts in other school services. PFI has also produced inadequate and costly community facilities.

Support staff are usually employed by the PFI consortia. Some Heads see this as a good thing - they do not have day-to-day responsibility for non-educational matters.

But the government plans to make all secondary schools responsible for the ownership and the management of schools and the employment of staff. It wants to encourage partnerships between schools and sponsors. In effect schools will become businesses in their own right. They will have even wider responsibility for both operational and employment matters than they do at the moment. This will include the buying of goods and services from a range of service providers and the management of the contracts for these services.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Act now. Discuss the Building Schools for the Future programme at the next meeting of your organisation. Get it to pass a resolution supporting the following proposals.

1. Schools and the wider community need to be consulted and fully involved in the Building Schools for the Future programme.

- There should be full consultation with trade unions, parents and community organisations on Building Schools for the Future proposals, particularly the review of the authority's educational vision and the preparation of the Strategic Business Case.
- The revision of the 'educational vision' should involve trade unions, community organisations and educational organisations.
- Community needs should be given a priority and a plan for identifying, prioritising and meeting community needs for meeting facilities, adult learning facilities, sport and leisure, community events, should be prepared and consulted on before an Outline Business Case is prepared.
- A Strategic Partnership Board should be set up as a matter of urgency with a wide representation from trade unions, parents, community organisations and educational organisations and clear powers to evaluate and revise the Strategic Business Case.
- An alternative organisation to the planned privately controlled Local Education Partnership Company should be fully investigated and appraised with the alternative guaranteeing that the Council has at least a 20% controlling interest.
- There should be full transparency and disclosure of the privately controlled Local Education Partnership Companies and their related organisations.

2. Building Schools for the Future should be a school building programme only

- The role of the Local Education Partnership Companies should be confined to those schools that receive Building Schools for the Future investment.
- The use of the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) should be minimised.
- City Academies should be excluded from the Building Schools for the Future plans - local authorities are only obliged to have considered and evaluated the option of including a City Academy and there is no requirement to have one.
- A full local impact assessment of the Building Schools for the Future proposals should be carried out before submissions are made to the Department for Education and Skills.

3. Building Schools for the Future has to meet local needs and protect local jobs

- Each Local Authority will develop its own local criteria at each stage of the process.
- There should be no outsourcing of educational support services.
- Services such as school meals, cleaning and caretaking should be excluded from PFI contracts.
- Local authority Direct Services Organisations should be allowed to bid for contracts where services are included; based on quality plans.
- Local authority architectural and technical services should be invited to design some of the Building School for the Future schools.
- Production and supply chains should be strengthened to make sure that employment in the regional construction industry and related services is maximised.

City Academies - An End to Comprehensive Education

The Academies initiative is a threat to teachers' pay conditions and job security. The Academies have an independent status.

This means that they can set their own pay and conditions arrangements. While teachers in Academies which replace existing schools will have their conditions protected on transfer, teachers newly appointed to Academies could be placed on separate contracts involving - longer working hours and less favorable working conditions.

Local democratic accountability is undermined by Academies because they operate as independent schools outside the local authority. The role and influence of private sponsors on the operation of the governing body and on the curriculum and ethos of Academies further undermines democratic accountability.

The impact of a substantial number of Academies on school admissions arrangements would be dramatic. They would undermine the ability of the Local Education Authority to plan coherent education provision. They even threaten the viability of Local Education Authorities.

Academies receive disproportionate funding (inevitably at the expense of other schools) - an average of £23m per Academy.

In addition the Government is giving up to £7.2m a year to pay for each school's running costs. Private and voluntary sector contributions are capped at £2m. Originally sponsors were asked to provide up to 20 per cent (around £2m) of the capital costs for each Academy, but now they provide no more than 8 per cent and sometimes less.



For further information about Building Schools for the Future
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Published by Council and Teacher Trade Unions in Tyne and Wear.