

OUR
SCHOOLS
ARE NOT
FOR SALE

LOCAL
CONTROL
THREAT



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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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. Four of the first wave local authorities to be targeted for the new programme are in the North East - Newcastle, Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland.

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

THE THREATS THE RISKS

The Government's Building Schools for the Future programme is a direct threat to local democratic control and to the future of the Local Education Authority.

The run down of the Local Education Authority and its replacement by a privately controlled Local Education Partnership Company

Unless the role and responsibility of the privately controlled Education Company is restricted from the start, it could begin to undermine the Local Education Authority and takeover more and more educational functions.

The erosion of democratic accountability for education policy and provision.

A privately controlled company will operate in parallel to the Local Education Authority. Elected members could have decreasing power and influence in shaping educational policy.

The privatisation of educational support services and the run down of the council's Direct Services Organisation

Facilities management services in PFI projects can be directly provided by the local authority. Outsourcing will have a knock-on effect on Direct Service Organisations, reducing the scope of services provided, and affecting the economies of scale for other services. The loss of services to schools could threaten the viability of Direct Service Organisations.

More and more teachers will be employed by private firms

The private sector already own most of the teacher supply agencies. City Academies and Foundation Schools will accelerate the growth of privately employed teachers.

The loss of design and technical services

The privately controlled Local Education Partnerships will commission the planning and design of new schools and will draw on the Department for Education and Schools 'exemplar designs' - standardised designs prepared by private architects. This is not good enough. The council's architects and technical services staff must be given the opportunity to plan and design new or refurbished Building Schools for the Future schools.

The further privatisation of school design through the central Government's programme will result in a loss of jobs and technical capacity in local government.

More inadequate and costly community facilities in schools being provided

Building Schools for the Future provides an opportunity to design and plan community facilities in schools that meet local social needs. But it is essential that community organisations are involved in identifying needs and agreeing priorities.

Regeneration opportunities being missed

New and refurbished schools can have a key role in supporting regeneration, particularly when they are linked to the provision of other facilities and services and to local employment strategies. But this will only succeed if Building Schools for the Future is treated as a regeneration rather than a building programme.

Local and regional economic and employment benefits being missed

Building Schools for the Future will create a new £400m building programme in Tyne and Wear. It is government policy to encourage local and regional purchasing of materials, goods and services - to maximise sustainable development and employment. The benefits of this approach could be lost unless it is planned and mainstreamed.

A high risk strategy for Local Authorities

The transfer of roles and responsibilities for schools to new privately controlled Education companies plus new procurement processes is a high risk strategy for local authorities. That's even more reason for the Council to proceed with caution and detailed planning.

Education services will be increasingly determined by market forces and private profit-making activities

Building Schools for the Future and the Government plans make all secondary schools responsible for the ownership and management of schools. This means schools will also be responsible for the employment of staff.

Add to that the development of partnerships between schools and sponsors (usually private) and there will be only one outcome - the privatisation of education and decision making driven by market forces rather than educational need. In effect schools will become businesses and have even wider responsibility for operational and employment matters.

DECISIONS FOR ELECTED MEMBERS

Local Councillors have a key role to play in the decision making process. Elected Members should ensure that their Council plans for Building Schools for the Future include the following.

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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