

Dawn Butler MP

Labour MP for Brent Central

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Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP
Secretary of State for Education
Ministerial and Public Communications Division
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

25/04/16

Dear Secretary of State,

I am writing to you to put on record my deep concern at plans to convert every school in my constituency into an academy by 2022.

I wish to make you aware that the announcement in the March budget, and further to that your Schools White Paper '*Educational Excellence Everywhere*' has been met with widespread disapproval amongst the Brent academic community. Indeed, in the days following your announcement I received a letter signed by the Chairs of Governors at 11 Brent schools.

Those schools include Mount Stewart Junior School, Mora Primary School, Mount Stewart Infant School, Wykeham Primary School, Preston Park Primary School, Fryent Primary School, Our Lady of Grace Infant and Nursery School, Brentfield Primary School, Park Lane Primary School, Chalkhill Primary Schools and Braintcroft Primary.

I have enclosed with this correspondence their letter to me.

I share their concern that the Schools White Paper removes democratic accountability of schools. I appreciate that the White Paper outlines a role for the local authority in ensuring every child has a school place, ensuring the needs of vulnerable pupils are met and in promoting and supporting the needs of parents. However by removing the schools from local authority scrutiny you have effectively removed their ability to adequately perform any of those functions.

Furthermore, 12 of the 13 community schools in my constituency affected by this move are already rated good or outstanding. This has not occurred by chance. In Brent we have worked hard to improve our local schools through working collaboratively between the local authority, staff, unions, governing bodies and parents. Your move to impose academisation undermines those hard won gains which have drastically improved educational outcomes for Brent students.

Our community is our strength

Dudden Hill | Dollis Hill | Harlesden | Kensal Green | Mapesbury | Stonebridge | Tokyngton | Welsh Harp | Willesden Green

I am committed to keeping my constituents informed on issues which may be of interest to them and my local Labour Party. I may write to you from time to time. If you do not wish to receive any correspondence from me please write to me at the above address.

The consequence of your decision means schools in my constituency being forced to divert attention away from the core tasks of teaching and learning. Instead schools will be forced to excessively focus on structure and to spend scarce funds on lawyers and consultants to manage the complex and costly process of academy transfer; funds which could be spent on new text books, school buildings and much more. This is irresponsible.

I also believe academisation will do nothing to tackle the very real challenges facing our education system such as a retention crisis and the widening attainment gap between poor pupils and their peers. It is not clear to me what issue academisation is striving to fix. And it is not just me, or indeed those within your own party questioning the evidence, but Sir Michael Wilshaw the Chief Executive of Ofsted has identified that we are not seeing improvements across seven Multi-Academy Trusts and indeed in some cases we've seen a decline.

Finally, the estimated £1.3bn that forced academisation will cost could in my view be far better spent on reviving the Building Schools for the Future programme to address the school place crisis.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dawn Butler', with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Dawn Butler MP

Labour Member of Parliament for Brent Central