

LETTER

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## The Disadvantages of Faith-based Academies and Trusts: schooling - don't be seduced by promises

A word of caution to parents who are caught up in the re-organisation of secondary schools and *all parents in the city* who may be seduced by the promises of the Academy and Trust proposals. First and most important, Academy schools are not locally accountable. Each Academy has a contract direct with the Government through the Department for Education and Skills. You cannot use your local councillor or the local authority if you are not happy about the school in the way you can now. Parents in other authorities that already have Academies have discovered that you cannot find out information if you are in dispute, as Academies are not subject to the Freedom of Information Act. Legal Chambers are fighting battles on behalf of parents.

The faith-based Academies and the Trusts would be their own admissions authority. The Institute for Public Policy Research press release, in their report on fairer admissions, stated, 'Faith schools which are their own admissions authorities *are ten times more likely to be highly unrepresentative of their surrounding area* than faith schools where the LEA is the admissions authority'. All parents in the city should be aware of this possibility.

Parental and community involvement in the governance of Academies, and some Trusts, is less than in local authority schools. One of the proposals states that responsibility for the curriculum is the responsibility of their national board, not the local governors. The powers for local governance are much reduced.

Your assets, those owned by the city council, including land, are handed over to unelected bodies that are not democratically responsible locally.

The re-organisation of schools in the city is required as a result of falling rolls, not because of failing schools, and it is not appropriate to have Academies. If extra resources are available from the Government they should be equitably spread throughout the city to all schools serving areas of high deprivation.

I urge parents to reply to the consultation, supporting the view that new schools should be provided by the local authority.

**Richard Harris**, former Councillor and Cabinet Member for Education

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