

For the last 100 years education in England and Wales has been a national service administered through democratically accountable local authorities. This system has worked well but is now under attack.

Academies will undermine the key strategic role of the local authority. The advent of so called "free" schools will mean that local authorities even lose control of the planning of pupil places.

WHAT HAVE LOCAL AUTHORITIES DONE FOR YOU?

A HEAD TEACHER WRITES:

"I was a head teacher for 21 years of a large school in Staffordshire which had and continues to have very high Ofsted ratings. I know the value of a local authority. When I wanted advice on occupational health matters, where did I turn? To my local authority. When I had a fire and I needed instant support, where did I go? To my local authority. When I needed guidance on autism, when I wanted my accounts VAT-secure,

help with the latest education regulations, legal assistance or help with IT advice, where did I go? To my local authority.

The idea that I, and every other head in the country, could get that support from the Young Peoples' Learning Agency (YPLA) in Westminster is laughable".

A DISTRACTION FOR HEAD TEACHERS?

Making sure that an academy school's needs are met in these respects is a whole different approach to school management, and risks elevating the running of the school as a business above its purpose of delivering education.

NO SCHOOL IS AN ISLAND

Collaborative working between schools supported by a central body remains essential to ensure that the needs of all children are identified and understood and that appropriate support services can be delivered. Education is not just about whether individual institutions succeed or fail, or benefit from some particular initiative, but whether there is a system as a whole in place that best meets the needs of all children.

SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS

Local authorities are not and never will be perfect. However, they are a safety net when there are problems with budgets, potential redundancies and deficit situations, problems with financial management, complex situations around staff health, induction, training needs, disability provision, challenging parents and pupils, as well as emergency situations such as fires, floods, pupil accidents, major crimes and so on.

They are a source of advice and guidance on a wide range of everyday issues that schools have to deal with, developed locally, and based on people's practical experience. Economies of scale prevent individual schools from replicating the expertise and funds available through local authorities to deal with these things.

These are only some of the services provided by the local authority that an academy school would have to fund and organise for itself:

- buildings support
- health and safety
- occupational health
- payroll and pensions
- meeting maternity leave and some other staffing costs
- library, music, interfaith and outdoor education services
- curriculum support
- legal services
- governor support
- risk and insurance management
- financial and budgeting arrangements
- EMA and SEN support
- education welfare

WHAT CAN WE DO?

The best way to maintain local authority support is for schools not to become academies. So we recommend you act with your colleagues to:

- Discuss and pass the NUT model resolution; inform your head and governing body of members' position regarding academies; inform your division/association secretary when you have passed the resolution.

- If your governors do propose a consultation on academy status, get in touch with your NUT division urgently to discuss how to try to influence the governors.
- If your school does become an academy, seek NUT support and advice on how best to try to protect your pay and conditions.



For more information on academies and the model resolution, go to www.teachers.org.uk/academies