

Save Cheney School from Academy Status

Cheney is a thriving, oversubscribed Local Authority school. Any change to the School should be about making a positive difference to students' educational attainment. If Cheney becomes an academy, we may lose more than we gain.

Will academy status improve education for pupils at Cheney?

No, academy status is no guarantee of educational improvement. In fact, Department of Education statistics show that, comparing like for like schools, academies get lower exam results (38% A*-C GCSEs) than Local Authority schools (44%). Some academies that were graded Good when under Local Authority control have now been put into Special Measures by OFSTED. Cheney School is already revamping the curriculum, cooperating with other schools, and buying in additional services when needed. Becoming an academy is not necessary to allow these changes, and may create more problems than it solves.

Will there be more money for my child's education if Cheney becomes an academy?

The Government has confirmed that academy status should not give schools a financial advantage or disadvantage, but an academy may quickly become a financial nightmare. The extra £225,000 Cheney expects to gain for conversion involves a government 'incentive' for the first year only, and amounts to barely 2-3% of the current budget. But as an academy the School will have to start buying in costly services every year, including Payroll, Insurance, Premises and Legal Services, often from the private sector where costs and profit may be emphasized over quality. Academy schools also have to take on responsibility for the Local Government pension scheme – both employer contributions and **a proportion of the debt liability**. Worse still, the extra money Cheney gets for conversion is taken out of the Council budget for collective services for all Oxford schools. This is not only inefficient, but actually

runs down services for all other Local Authority schools, affecting children in local primary schools.

Keep Cheney Local, Keep Your Rights

Converting to an academy means that non-discriminatory admissions policies, and staff pay and pensions will lose their legal protection. An academy has no obligation to adhere to these terms. As costs rise amid funding cuts, promises about keeping these things the same will crumble, even with the best of intentions. In the process, we move one step closer to introducing school fees. Can we seriously consider selling off these rights for a one-off payment amounting to £140 per child?

No Democratic Control and No Accountability

Academy status would see Cheney School run by an unelected Trust, accountable only to itself. The Trust can appoint as few as two parents to the Governing Body. It is not required to appoint Governors from the staff of the School and is only permitted one from the Local Authority. Once the decision to convert to an academy is taken, parents have lost the ability to reverse it if things go wrong. Independence from the Local Authority means losing the power to influence what happens in Cheney unless we take our case to the Secretary of State for Education, in London.

If We Don't Convert Now, Will We Be Left Behind?

Academy conversion is being presented as an unstoppable bandwagon that requires us to act quickly. But the School is being advised about academy conversion by Strictly Education, a private company whose main business is selling the services that academies have to buy in once they convert! This private company is being paid £25,000 for 'helping' us through this consultation, but is their advice in our interest, or in theirs? Many successful schools are choosing to remain locally accountable community schools. WE URGE CHENEY TO DO THE SAME.

Have Your Say – The Consultation period ends on 23rd March (midday). Governors' decision 16th April.

- Send in your completed Consultation Response Form or e-mail clerktogovernors@cheney.oxon.sch.uk
- Attend a Consultation Meeting (**Monday 12th March, School Hall, Cheney – 7-8.30pm** OR **Bayard Hill School 3-4pm** OR **14th March, Wood Farm School, 3.15-4.15pm**).

Produced by Cheney Parents Against Academy Status, with inspiration from the Anti Academies Alliance and Local Schools Network.