



## Government Drives Forward Academy Programme



Over the last year the Government's efforts to bribe and cajole schools into becoming Academies has had some success in the Secondary sector. In West Cheshire nearly half of secondary schools have now adopted this status – mainly driven on by financial incentives, given at the expense of Community Schools.

Now the Government has launched a new wave of national pressure, declaring that hundreds of under-performing primary schools will be required to become Academies, regardless of the views of parents, staff or Governors. Three schools are affected in West Cheshire – Willow Wood in Winsford; Rudheath in Northwich; and Wallerscote in Weaverham. These schools are being required to "voluntarily" find a "sponsor" – an organisation running a chain of Academies – or face having one imposed upon them by the Government.

UNISON, along with the teaching unions, continues to point out that Academy status is no magic wand in terms of academic success. In the case of the 3 primary schools that are being forced to become Academies, because they have been rated as "unsatisfactory", the Local Authority has already put in place measures to turn the situation around. There is absolutely no benefit or justification for steaming-rolling these schools down this route without any local consultation.

Staff may well see little immediate change from becoming an Academy, but from the Government's viewpoint it is about breaking up national bargaining by trade unions. Most schools, bound by TUPE legislation, promise to maintain staff terms and conditions in the short term. And with most schools continuing to pay national pay rates and give national terms and conditions, schools know that staff would vote with their feet if terms were cut. However, as the number of Community schools decreases there is little doubt that academies will start to move in this direction. For teachers, Michael Gove's recent announcement about ending national pay grades for teachers will clearly spur this.

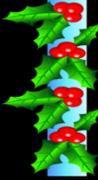
Support staff are potentially at the sharp end of such changes. Already we have seen cleaning and IT staff outsourced by Academies. Teaching Assistants, catering, grounds maintenance and administrative staff will all find their ability to defend job grades can disappear once they are outside the Council family – where equal pay claims are possible. We will need to watch carefully for any attempts to undermine or move away from the NJC Job Evaluation Scheme when new jobs are advertised. UNISON and all the other education unions, including the National Association of Head-teachers, are opposed to schools being forced to become Academies. In schools deemed to be failing, staff will undoubtedly feel vulnerable. However, wherever parents, Governors or staff are willing to oppose the imposition of Academy status, UNISON and the teaching unions are willing to take up that fight and to stand with local members in resisting this Government dogma.

Additionally, for your information UNISON and the RCN have published the results of a survey on providing support to pupils with health needs. The results show that a growing number of children and young people with complex health needs are being put at risk as staff are being pressurised into caring for them without enough training or support. We are calling on schools, local authorities and the government to take action. **Dawn Moulton Assistant Branch Secretary and Schools Lead**

**HAPPY NEW YEAR FROM ALL AT UNISON WEST CHESHIRE BRANCH**

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# GREETINGS FROM UNISON WEST CHESHIRE BRANCH

## Merry Christmas



It's been such a difficult year with all the restructures, sickness reviews and terms and conditions being changed in April 2012. I know that myself and Branch and Regional Officers are fully engaged in supporting you through these hard times. Times are hard and increasing pressure is on colleagues to do over and above, working longer hours to achieve targets etc., however you can only do what you can do and I emphasize that colleagues need to look after themselves and their well being.

UNISON is still continuing to challenge the implementation of the terms and conditions. With regards to Universities, Colleges and other voluntary organizations I know it is difficult as cuts to funding is affecting yourselves. We need to stay strong and united during these austerity times and hopefully we can get through this.

We have a large membership but we NEED more members to ensure that we continue to have a voice and more influence on this Tory Council.

On behalf of myself and all Branch Officers may I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a bright and prosperous New Year.



**West Cheshire UNISON Branch has started to have regular meetings with local Labour Councillors and all Labour Link members are welcome to attend. If you would like to join the Branch Labour Link, it won't cost you a penny, but you will need to contact the Branch and let us know on 01244 346894.**

