



Swindon Division

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On the proposal to close **Penhill Primary School** to allow the expansion of **Swindon Academy**.

I write on behalf of Swindon Division of the NUT to object to the proposal to close Penhill Primary school to allow the expansion of Swindon Academy.

Introductory remarks.

The case put for closing Penhill Primary is broadly:

- The school is on the DCSF "hard to shift" list reflecting levels of attainment at KS2.
- A series of assertions that the expansion of the Academy will raise standards and strengthen good practice.

This proposal is **not** based on any evidence, indeed evidence accumulating nationally and locally about the results of the Academies programme seems to be excluded as of course it was when the original decision to establish the Swindon Academy was settled.

Consultation.

The consultation was **seriously flawed**. The whole process seems to have **seriously downplayed** the opposition of a large majority of stake holders at Penhill Primary to the proposal, as evidenced by meetings with staff and a petition, which I understand was signed by parents of a majority of pupils at the school.

SBC officers involved in the consultation were quite open, for example in discussions on the education JCC, about the fact that the closure was a position they supported. The consultation was seen as a way, at best, of attempting to answer objections. It was not seen as a way of collecting the views of stakeholders to influence the decision. This was an approach which generated anger. When the DJB report suggests people felt the decision was a foregone conclusion it seems clear they were correct.

We have remarked on the role of DJB in consultations about ULT schools before. They are commissioned by ULT and DCSF. The question needs posing once again, if they ever decided against the ULT position would they ever be commissioned again?

The partial nature of the DJB consultancy position is clear in the report.

Firstly comments are listed in a way suggesting similar numbers of people lined up on each side of the debate. This effect has been magnified by the method used to assemble focus groups. I understand that invitations to the focus group were made in such a way as to balance those against with those in