

favour. This in no way reflected the opinions of stake holders and leads to a report which incorrectly suggests opinions were equally divided

In the report each comment voicing concerns about the academy proposal is answered by reference to a ULT comment or position. At one point an objection relating to transition is brushed aside as the result of "muddled thinking."

Following these sections in the report is the Academy response, section 6, which suggests that opponents of the proposals are not concerned with children or their opportunities. Curiously this section doesn't even comment on prospects of improvement in terms of attainment standards

Despite the DJB Consultancy report recommending, on cue, that the proposal to close Penhill should proceed it doesn't trouble itself to suggest any evidence that this will achieve the aim of improving pupil attainment at KS2.

Attainment.

Since the stated aim of the proposal is the improvement of attainment we might expect some evidence that this is what the proposal will lead to. None is offered so it is worth looking at evidence accumulating nationally on the attainment levels achieved at academies.

Around the end of last school year Education secretary Ed Balls announced a "national challenge". His suggestion was that 638 secondary schools were failing and could be closed to be replaced by academies. This amounts to 20% of secondary schools. Indicating the incoherence of the policy 31% of Academies are also failing schools by the measure used. The point is this: The mantra about academies improving standards is nonsense.

Detailed analysis has shown that academies have not improved attainment. Early claims that they had were based entirely on the fact that the new schools switched from GCSEs to less demanding GNVQs. An intermediate pass at GNVQ counted as four GCSE A*-C passes for the purposes of league tables. When figures including Maths and English GCSEs were used this improvement was all but wiped away. There was a modest 4% improvement but it needs to be noted that many Academies adjusted their intake by admissions policies, and exclusions. It also needs to be noted that they gained £1600 per student as "new start" funds.

In addition the least successful students at academies do even worse. This is important to note in an area of disadvantage. 19% leave (2006) with no passes at A-G which is worse than predecessor schools. (figures from Terry Wrigley, Dept of Education studies at Edinburgh University.)

A February 2007 Audit office report indicates that the Academies project has been less successful than the far less expensive Excellence in Cities (EiC) programme. It also shows that improvement in predecessor schools was at least as strong as in the academies replacing them.

The NAO report shows that at Key Stage 3, pupils at Academies performed less well in English (52 per cent), Maths (53 per cent) and Science (42 per cent) compared to EiC pupils in deprived areas (62 %, 61% and 54% respectively. (TUC commissioned report.)

(<http://www.tuc.org.uk/extras/academies.pdf>)