

Penhill Forum

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Attaeus the Roman

26 June, 2008

Dear Sirs/Madam

Academy/Penhill Primary

We object to the take over of Penhill Primary School by the Academy, for the following reasons:

1. There is no evidence that this will help our children more than any other way, especially with recent school results endorsing our concerns.
Neither the school nor we were invited to be part of previous discussions of options for the future of the school.
No one should ignore effect of poverty and lack of aspiration on a children's ability to learn and the care needed to ensure they have a good childhood with no fear of learning.
2. That this will have a very serious effect on the government's drive for Community engagement and empowerment.
The obvious railroading of the consultation with leaders of the same saying "It's going ahead anyway" takes away empowerment and stalls engagement.
We object to the obvious wrong footing, disrespect for community and parent wishes.
The see an obvious lack of understanding of community work principles which does not augur well for the future academy management of the school.
3. That this will have a serious effect on our community plan and 'out of school' activities and Adult Learning.
Having already disregarded previous meetings about OUR plans for children and youth Activities, we would not expect greater co-operation after the take over.
Disregarding community work principles that a variety of venues are more appropriate to community engagement and Adult Learning, especially for those who have had bad experience at school. Penhill community led projects have been extremely successful in Adult Learning take up.
4. We already have experience that other statutory agencies take away resources from our projects.
There is no evidence to support the promise that the Voluntary and Community groups of Penhill would be looked upon as partners.

5. SBC's paper, 'Connecting People, Connecting places' shows plans to Cluster communities around Secondary schools and give them more standing and importance in the general community. This means we need to be more aware of the management and the head-ship of those schools. Not choosing a democratic option for school management leads us to believe that this is not the way forward.
6. Experience shows there will be a non-productive relationship between this community and a school forced on us.
7. We are concerned about the march of Academy management into the primary sector, which could lead to all of our local school being under one management, and one that is not proven. It is difficult enough to deal with problems for our children without putting that management at 'long arm'.
8. Since the pre-statutory consultation we have discovered that our other Primary school is to be rebuilt as 'state of the art' with many 'add ons' which will not be available in-house to Penhill Primary. Whilst we are very pleased about the rebuild, we are very concerned about the in-equity that will be felt and fear for our future community cohesion and its effects on the primary population of Penhill.
9. We suggest that a preferred option is to explore TRUST status as a better way forward for Penhill Primary. This would be more inclusive of the community and give us a better, more engaging way of supporting the school, and include people with more understanding of community engagement work and the problems of an area of compounded deprivation. It will enable us to try for better a better balance between the two Penhill primary schools.

Yours sincerely,

Marilyn Beale,
Secretary
On behalf of the Penhill Forum Steering Group