



School workforce news

...nursery nurses, secretaries, bursars, learning support practitioners, sitekeepers, school meals staff, teaching assistants, learning mentors, administrators, midday supervisors, librarians, cleaners, personal care assistants, technicians ...

GMB your union in school

Issue 31, June 2010:

This is the thirty-first in a series of bulletins for GMB reps and members working in schools. Our bulletins will keep you up-to-date on national policy developments and other news affecting the school workforce.

Government's Academy "Offer" to schools: What can members do?

The new Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, has wasted no time in trying to undermine the state education system by offering all schools in England the opportunity to convert to Academy status – without any requirement to consult parents, the local community or the workforce.

This signals a complete reversal by the Government as we were previously negotiating on a National pay and conditions framework for School Support Staff (SSSNB). There is now a new direction in Government policy, and that is to undermine the accountable, democratic public delivery of education to our children.

GMB is opposed to Academies in principle but we recognise that our priority is to organise, represent and protect our members in their workplace and we are committed to supporting all GMB School members regardless of the status of their school.

There are over 120,000 GMB members in schools, many of whom have been in contact asking what they can do as GMB members, parents and even Governors to try and stop the flight of their school into the private/non-government sector?

At GMB Congress GMB committed to not making the same mistakes that we did during the 1980's, which was to believe that we could do nothing.

We committed to being pro-active in supporting members in taking the campaign to the Head Teachers and Governing Bodies in order to protect them and their conditions of employment

We know that this situation poses a massive threat but it is also a great opportunity to engage with the 400,000 school workers that are not a member of a trade union about the protection and benefits of being a member of the GMB.

Government's Proposed "Academy" Timeline – No Time to Waste

The Government believes that **the entire process could take as little as 3 months**; this is possible because there is no longer a requirement to consult on the conversion, therefore it is vital that members hit the ground running.

FIRST STEPS:

Organise a meeting with all the support staff as quickly as you can, whether they are GMB members or not. At this meeting, organise a delegation to see the Headteacher. Ask all non-members to join to ensure they are covered, protected and can be represented by GMB.

Meet with the Headteacher and find out whether they have applied for your school to become an Academy. If they have ask them when the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) or TUPE consultation with GMB will commence.

If your school has applied to become an Academy then set up another meeting with your Workplace Organiser or GMB Officer. They can advise you what to do next.

You need to know the Governors intentions for staff pay and terms and conditions once Academy Status.

NEXT STEPS:

GMB has developed a pack with specific information for GMB members regarding Academy Schools including pro-forma letters to submit to the Chair of Governors and Head; these can be sent by members as parents or as

GMB members of the Schools' workforce. You can obtain this pack from your GMB Workplace Organiser or Officer.

It is important to begin speaking to parents and other members of the local community about the potential for your school to be taken out of the state system without any consultation.

If possible, a petition from parents to the Head and Chair of Governors would help to generate support and indicate the level of resistance to any proposal to convert to Academy status.

Contact should be made with the local teaching union representatives in order to build an entire-school alliance (where possible) committed to resisting the move.

PROTECTION:

If your Head and Governing Body have made the decision to convert then the school workforce then the [Department for Education has stated](#) that *"The current employer of the school staff will carry out a consultation on the transfer of staff under TUPE"*.

GMB Officers are very familiar with the TUPE process and will be on hand to support members through the process.

You can access a Frequently Asked Questions document on TUPE and your rights in the Academy campaign pack available via your GMB Officer.

DIRECT DEBIT

Finally, it is vital that all GMB Schools members move onto direct debit payment of their membership because it is the only way to guarantee that your membership subscriptions continue in the event of a transfer from the local authority payroll to a private provider.