

**DCSF Response to the e-petition to Number10.gov.uk  
The Official site of the Prime Minister's Office**

**Wednesday 8 October 2008**

**Falmer Academy – epetition response**

We received a petition asking:

“We the undersigned petition the Prime Minister to stop the closure of Falmer High School in Brighton & Hove and hold a ballot to decide if an Academy is what the community wants.”

**Details of Petition:**

“Please stop the closure of the already improving Falmer High school in Brighton & Hove only to replace it with an Academy that will specialise in entrepreneurship and sport. Keep Falmer High School as a state comprehensive run by education professionals and not a wealthy businessman with no educational background. Allow the school to continue to improve and enable the staff to continue to do their jobs to a high standard under the leadership of the Head. A ballot across the Brighton and Hove community would provide evidence that an academy is NOT actually wanted.”

**Read the Government's Response**

“Academies are all-ability State schools with a mission to transform education. They are established and managed by sponsors with funding from the government. They are not maintained by the local authority, but are set up with its consent and collaborate closely with it and other schools in the area.

Sponsors are responsible for setting the strategic direction of the school, leading the governing body, setting goals and standards, determining curriculum, admissions and hiring top staff. The day to day running of the school is left to the headteacher and teaching staff. Evidence from National Audit Office, Price Waterhouse Coopers (PWC), and, most importantly, Academy headteachers show that they find the drive, skills, and support from their sponsors to be invaluable and a key part of the success of their schools.

It is proposed that Falmer School will be replaced by an Academy in September 2010. The Academy will be sponsored by Rod Aldridge, the founder of the Capita Group, who grew up in Hove. The Universities of Brighton and West Sussex will be education partners of the Academy.

The Academy proposal is currently in its feasibility stage. This means that consultation is underway by the local authority and the Academy sponsor on the closure of Falmer School and its replacement by an Academy. The closure consultation began on 1 September and lasts for six weeks. It follows earlier consultation by the council, before the summer break, on the Academy proposal. Once closure consultation has been completed and responses considered, the council will then make a final decision in October as to whether to approve the closure proposal. As happens with most Academy proposals any closure decision will be subject to the Academy then being given approval to go ahead by DCSF Ministers. We current expect Ministers to be able to decide the Falmer Academy Funding Agreement proposal in late October or shortly afterwards, but subject to the feasibility stage having been successfully completed, and the necessary legal, educational and other steps having been taken. The following link is to the local authority website on the proposal: [www.proposedfalmeracademy.org](http://www.proposedfalmeracademy.org).

Independent assessment of the Academies Programme show that they are working:

The National Audit Office report found that GCSE performance is improving faster in Academies than in other types of school. Taking account of both pupils' personal circumstances and their prior attainment, Academies' GCSE performance is substantially better, on average, than other schools.

The 2007 PWC report said that Academies' progress in terms of pupil achievement has generally exceeded corresponding movements at a national level and amongst similar schools.

OfSTED – To date 24 Academies have had full OfSTED inspections. One Academy – Mossbourne – has been graded as outstanding in every single respect. In terms of their overall effectiveness, four have been graded as outstanding, 7 good, with the remaining 13 graded as satisfactory. Key to the future success of the Academies is their leadership and management. On this indicator, six Academies have been graded outstanding, 17 good and one satisfactory. That is 96% which have good or outstanding leadership, compared to 62% for secondary schools in general."