

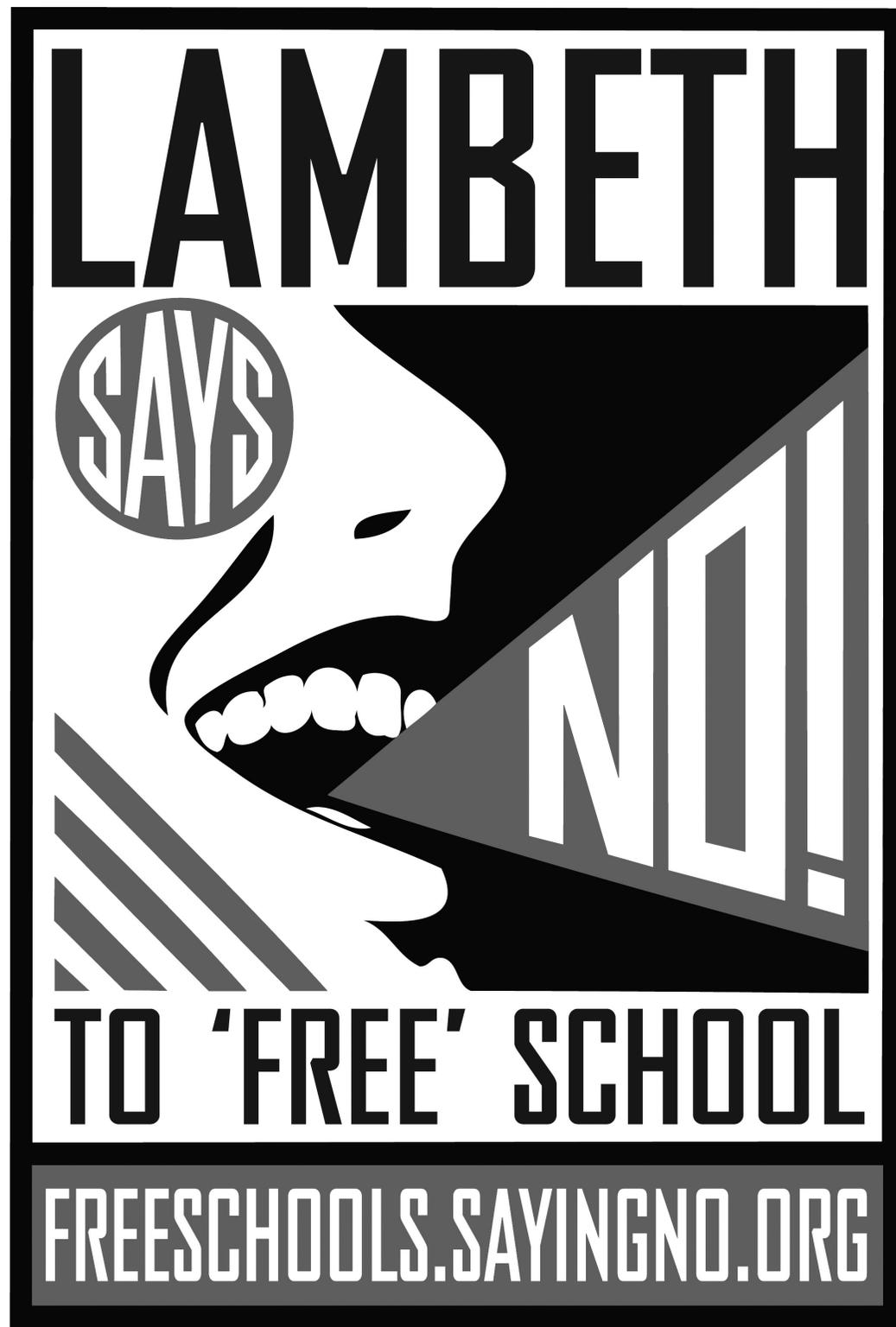
WHY NORTH LAMBETH DOESN'T NEED A FREE SCHOOL

A group want to set up a free school on the old Lilian Baylis site.

Here's why a free school will not help this community or its children and why we should support our local schools.

- Planning for schools needs to be done in collaboration with the local authority, local Headteachers and parents, not decided by a group of individuals
- The shortage of places is in the central Brixton area, not the north of the borough. 3 new schools have been built in Lambeth and a fourth new school has been given the go ahead. Other schools have expanded.
- Free schools are an untested experiment that could undermine local democracy. They are funded by central government and are not accountable to the local community. In Sweden they have increased social segregation.
- A new school could mean our local schools could lose out on funding and students.
- A free school will be funded from money cut from BSF (building schools for the future) – money that should have been shared out for all our schools.

See inside for more information on free schools.



WHAT IS A FREE SCHOOL?

- Free schools will be state funded but completely independent and will not even have to employ qualified teachers.
- Anyone can set them up.
- They can be housed in buildings that were not designed for school use, such as office blocks, garden centres, residential properties.
- They can set their own curriculum.

FREE SCHOOLS ARE...

NOT ACCOUNTABLE TO THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

- Setting up a free school means putting it in the hands of central Government and potentially a third-party organisation like an academy sponsor or private company.
- Decisions about the school will not be taken by the local council or the community.
- The free school proposers include two people who have stood as Tory MPs. It clearly has a political agenda.
- Katherine Birbalsingh has been announced as the Headteacher. She had much publicity for her standing ovation at the Tory party conference. Yet the Tory government's cuts are what are harming the chances of our pupils. Our local ethnic minority achievement team has just been made redundant due to the government's cuts.

AN UNTESTED EXPERIMENT

- Free schools are entirely new to this country.
- However, in Sweden the free school project has damaged educational standards, increased segregation and allowed private companies to make money from state education.
- The Government has pledged just £50 million for capital investment (buildings and infrastructure) in all free schools. It has not made specific commitments about future funding. The money has come from the scrapping of two grants for schools: BSF and Harnessing technology grant.
- The local free school wants to set up on the old Lilian Baylis site which would compete directly with the three local secondary schools.
- Who is accountable for the government money being spent on this free school bid?



'This is a recipe for greed, individualism, competitiveness and the very antithesis of social cohesion'

Gus John – Education professor

SO WHY NOT BACK LOCAL SCHOOLS?

- There are great local schools which have received outstanding inspection results. Investment in a free school may jeopardise their continuing funding and success.
- The local authority has plans for a new fourth school.
- This would provide better value for money and would benefit the community by being based on the existing school site.
- There would be no uncertainty about the suitability of location, future funding or the sort of curriculum it would teach.
- The argument of the free school group is based on the need for more school places in Lambeth but they don't explain how they will affect existing schools.
- The group say that this school will be for working class and black families. These are precisely the families that will be harmed if funding is taken away from the 4 surrounding schools.

A THREAT TO THE LOCAL FAMILY OF SCHOOLS

- Free Schools, like academies, will be given a share of the funding the local authority currently retains to spend on all schools. Services to local schools could suffer or will no longer be viable.
- The local authority will still have to find the funding for those services it is still legally required to provide to all schools – including to Free Schools.

If you want to voice your concern, contact the local MP Kate Hoey on hoeyk@parliament.uk and the campaign via the website freeschools.sayingno.org