

The latest news and announcements from Derbyshire UNISON

## Hallam diocese MATs

The Secretary of State has now formally withdrawn the Academy Orders for all 19 schools affected



## Forced academisation threat for schools is stopped

**The Secretary of State for Education has agreed to withdraw Academy Orders that were sent to schools in the Catholic Diocese of Hallam after education unions warned that they were 'unlawful'.**

Unions representing staff in schools across Hallam Diocese – which has schools in Yorkshire and the North Midlands – wrote to the Secretary of State last month warning him that letters sent to all Voluntary Aided schools in the area informing them that they would be forced to join Multi-Academy Trusts were 'unlawful' and unless they were withdrawn unions would have no choice but to pursue legal action.

The Secretary of State has now formally withdrawn the Academy

Orders for all 19 schools affected. The unions who took part in this action were school leaders' union NAHT, the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL), the National Education Union (NEU), and public service union UNISON.

**Paul Whiteman, General Secretary of school leaders' union NAHT,** said: "Becoming an academy can be a positive step for some schools. But it is only the governing body and leaders of a school that can truly understand if

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joining a Multi-Academy Trust will be in the best interests of their pupils. Compulsion can never be the right way to convince schools of this and the situation in Hallam has been badly mishandled. It has taken a serious toll on the leaders and governors of the schools affected and has been an unacceptable distraction during an especially difficult period of the pandemic. We will now press for a further independent investigation into what went wrong."

**Geoff Barton, General Secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders,**

said: "We are pleased Education Secretary Nadhim Zahawi has withdrawn these academy orders but disappointed that they were issued in the first place and that it has taken the threat of legal action to address this situation. It is integral to the process that, other than in very specific circumstances, governing bodies must decide whether they want to academise and we hope the lesson has been learned that this principle must be followed."

**Kevin Courtney, Joint General Secretary of the National Education Union,**

said: "This is a victory for common sense, and an important line in the sand. Schools should not be forced or coerced into becoming an academy. There was no justification for these academy orders, and it is right that they have been withdrawn."

**UNISON head of education Mike Short** said:

"This was the right decision, but this process should never been started in the first place. Unions have worked hard over the past few weeks to stop this unsettling and pointless exercise. Dedicated school staff could have done without the extra headache after all the anxiety of the past two years. It's important nothing like this ever happens again. It must always be individual schools that decide what's best for their pupils."

Derbyshire UNISON is today writing to members at all four Derbyshire schools involved with a fuller update.