

# Pressure on private schools to help state schools

by Francis Bennion

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*The Times*, 12 Oct 2011

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The Government, backed by the forces of the state, is urging private schools to play a greater part in the running of state schools (report and leading article, 11 October 11 2011). This is a political intrusion on the freedom of those who operate and finance private schools, which are often charities in law. The law gives them charitable status because they serve the public good by educating their own pupils, whether or not they award them bursaries. If they also help the public good in other ways (as by assisting state schools) that is irrelevant to their charitable status. I trust this will be confirmed in the pending legal proceedings.

If the staff of a private school are distracted from their proper duties by having to spend time and effort on state school affairs this unreasonably increases the costs of the private school, which is bound to be reflected in increased fees. Parents reasonably object. They are already paying their share of the proper costs of their children's school, together (through taxation) with a proportion of the costs of state schools they do not use. Now the Prime Minister Mr David Cameron wants them also to pay through their school fees a further share of state school costs. This is manifestly unfair.

[I am not surprised at a private school headmaster recently suggesting that a school that can afford to second its senior staff to run another school has got too much slack in the system and ought to reduce its fees (report October 11)].<sup>1</sup>

## References:

None

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<sup>1</sup> Published in *The Times* 12 October 2011. Passage in square brackets omitted from published version.