

## **Dr Dan Moynihan Speech: Conservative Party Conference**

### **Public Services: Tackling the Causes of Poverty**

Your theme this morning is tackling the causes of poverty and you have rightly been focussing on the importance of the education system as a way of doing so.

Let me tell you, across the country you will find teachers, school support staff, businesses and individuals all ready and willing and able to help you.

But education is just a blunt tool if the people doing the educating aren't given the freedom to do what's needed in order to drive change and improvement. To give the children in their care the ability, desire and confidence to succeed.

Because there are three types of poverty that impact on children and which can harm their chances of a better life.

- **The Economic poverty** that is common amongst the families of many of our students in some of the most disadvantaged areas of the country in London;
- **There is the poverty of aspiration** that is too frequently endemic in communities that have been let down and abandoned by society.
- So that children are never given the encouragement to believe they can do well enough at school to go to University;
- And where too many children believe they are more likely to win X Factor than to conduct X-Rays because they see people a bit like them on TV talent shows but have never met someone like themselves working in a professional position in a hospital;
- **And the poverty of ambition** that occurs in education authorities that have given up on individual schools. Schools that for years have been allowed to drift. To go slowly but surely downhill and then stay there. Where bad behaviour is

left unchecked until it becomes the norm. Where standards fall, good teachers leave and official after official wash their hands of the problem. And when asked why say, there's nothing that can be done and unfortunately we are not just talking about poorly performing labour councils here.

Well we think a lot can be done. And we've proved it. So please give us those drifting and failing schools and we'll show just how much their students can achieve when given the right encouragement and environment in which to learn.

Our results speak for themselves. Across the board, Harris Academies are

- outperforming the schools they replaced providing a quality of schooling that makes achievement the norm, not the exception.
- And they are sending our students to university, into further education and then into the workplace with an understanding of the traditional values of discipline, respect and good behaviour.

- Our year on year improvements in GCSE results including English and maths have consistently outpaced the national average by four or five times. And Ofsted says the quality of education we provide is outstanding.

Now, our teachers are heroes. They work hard. They give everything they have to make our schools successful.

But they're not miracle workers. Because it's not miracles that are required.

It's common sense and the freedom to run our schools

- without the bureaucracy and interference of a local authority with 20 conflicting priorities
- without a culture of excuses that things can't change or worse, don't need to because the children aren't capable of doing any better.
- and, importantly, without any extra funding on top of what other schools get. We just use that money better by putting it into our schools rather than it disappearing into a local authority black hole.

The lobby against the Academies Programme and Free Schools argue that they don't want an end to bog-standard comprehensives.

Well I do.

The parents at our academies do.

Just last week a petition of 750 local parents wrote to Michael urging him to help them have a Harris Academy in their Borough.

Why? Because what we have to offer – what we have shown is possible and replicable - is what they want and what they believe their children deserve.

If we can do our bit to assist those blighted by economic poverty then that is a start. But it's not enough. We have to also eradicate the poverty of ambition and say no to a culture that too often views drift as an acceptable outcome in tough times.

More fool any anti academies campaigner who assumes that just because parents may happen to live in an area of economic poverty, they don't want the very best education for their child.

Our plans are to open a further 20 academies. Lord Harris, who himself grew up in south London in circumstances so very similar to many of our students, is fully committed to growing our Federation. This year we are celebrating the 20<sup>th</sup> birthday of Harris City Academy Crystal Palace which began life as a CTC; the forerunners of the Academy Movement.

So I would invite any of you here, if you share our hopes and desire to create as successful a force in education as the CTCs were then and as the Academies are now, to seize the initiative.

It is time to free up education to create local schools that are the pride of their neighbourhoods and the gateway to an aspirational future for their pupils.