

MEDIA RELEASE

RELEASE IMMEDIATE: 14 January 2005

Government figures undermine push for foundation status

The Government's drive to encourage schools to switch from community to foundation status has been undermined by new statistics within the GCSE and equivalent Achievement and Attainment Tables, issued on 13 January by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). The Education Network (TEN) claimed today.

The list of the top 100 improving maintained schools shows that 61 of them are community schools, virtually matching the proportion of all secondary schools that are community schools (65 per cent). This evidence contradicts the assertion in the Department's recent consultation on foundation schools (which closed on 31 December) that: "experience suggests that the backing of the foundation can help strengthen a school's mission and ethos, and inject drive and dynamism into school leadership".

TEN's Co-ordinator, Martin Rogers, said: "It is clear from this new official information that the community school sector is improving as fast as other categories of school.

"TEN criticised the DfES's recent consultation paper for making unsupported assertions about the benefits of foundation status, and suggested that they would be resented by the many successful and improving schools that are making strong progress without foundation status. The information now issued by the DfES justifies that criticism.

"Furthermore, such a switch from community to foundation status would reduce at a stroke the number of elected parent governors from one third of the total to just one governor. This seems at odds with the new Secretary of State's welcome emphasis on the role of parents in her first major speech last week to the North of England Education conference."