

16th March, 2016

Dear John Tomsett,

I am writing to you as a Huntington School parent. I have recently read your book, *This Much I Know*, and found much that resonates with my own beliefs and experiences (I am a teacher). Your values-driven philosophy is primarily why I wanted my children to come to Huntington School.

This week we are told that every school in England is to become an academy. In your writing, you have expressed serious concerns over the academisation of schools. Now it seems you will be forced down a road you have no wish to travel and have thus far avoided.

I'm deeply sad that this is the future, not just for Huntington but for all schools. It seems to me to be yet another step towards a market driven, neo-liberal approach to education that is abhorrent to many teachers and not enough parents. It's difficult to explain why this feels like the wrong direction for schools; I suppose some of it is simply fear of the unknown. No doubt there are some wonderful academy chains out there, but increasingly, the future for schools looks corporate and shiny and unkind. This is not what I want for my children, or anybody else's.

This brings me to my reason for writing to you: I can't imagine you are feeling delighted with the prospect of becoming an academy. You may be wishing you'd become a golfer after all, or even considering a return to green keeping! Your wonderful, ambitious, uplifting and above all human, vision for Huntington School might seem under threat in the face of what may come. But, I believe wholeheartedly that it is needed *now more than ever*. There has never been a moment, certainly in my lifetime, in which voices such as yours, and visions like the one you have for Huntington School have been as vitally important.

I am sure that you will navigate a meaningful path through these changes; that there is perhaps a way to become an 'alternative' model for academisation – one which achieves everything expected by the Department for Education, yet still allows you to teach, to know and care deeply about your students, and to continue to practise leadership that prioritises love over fear. It won't be easy but I have no doubt that at Huntington you will achieve it and that all your students, including my own children, will reap the rewards.

Yours sincerely,