

The Inquirer

An independent weekly paper for City students.

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University's plan to close local school

City faces backlash over £1m funding for academy



Scheduled for demolition: City plans to pull down Islington Green School

City University's plans to turn Islington Green School into a privately-sponsored academy have been overwhelmingly opposed by teachers at the school.

The move has been criticised by the two largest teachers' unions, the NUT and NASUWT, who claim the scheme would be "privatisation by stealth". A secret ballot held by the school's staff association turned out 89 to 3 against the move.

City is putting up £1m of the £50m total funding for the City of London Academy, and in return will have some influence over the academy's curriculum and other policies.

"We welcome collaboration with City," said Ken Muller, Islington NUT representative, "we just don't see why, if the University has £1m to spend, it doesn't spend it on their own students or staff."

"Less advantaged families will be the losers"

City will also set aside special places for academy students to come to the university as well as collaborating with staff from the school on teaching matters.

Many parents are mystified. One, Mike Kelly, said: "There's nothing wrong here – it's a good school. It could use some new buildings, but there are other ways of doing that."

Islington council say the scheme will be a huge benefit to children, but the teachers do not agree. "This scheme will not help the local children and families in Islington", continued Muller.

"This is already happening at St Mary Magdalene's Academy in Holloway. It's three times over-subscribed and families have to buy houses inside the catchment area for their children to attend the school."

"It will only be well-off parents who can afford to do this – which only goes to support our claim that academies will create a two-tier system of schooling in which less advantaged

families will be the losers."

Islington Green School is currently in disarray, following a round of redundancies last month and the sudden departure of the head credited with turning the school around, Trevor Avere-Beeson. Since the redundancies, class sizes have risen, with some classes going up to 30 students.

The new head, Christopher Walford, splits his time between Islington Green and another soon-to-be academy in Peterborough. He revealed this week that he and the school's governors were only told of the official notice to close the school two days before receiving it.

City academies are controversial as they involve private or semi-private organisations in the funding and running of schools.

The schools are transferred from state ownership to private companies, despite continued government funding – in effect creating state-funded but unaccountable schools. Academies can set aside places for high-achieving pupils under a 'fair banding' system, and are also able to select for particular 'aptitude' in the academy's specialist subject.

David Rhind, City's vice-chancellor, says the university is passionate about the city academy plan: "our aspirations are to make the academy a top class school and we believe we can have the biggest impact if we are centrally involved."

The government calls them "21st century schools" and says they improve results, but this has not been proven – and one of the first, Unity Academy in Middlesbrough, was put into Ofsted's 'special measures' in 2005, three years after opening.

The government has recently had trouble finding sponsors for its academies. Universities have stepped in to fill the gaps left by fleeing business sponsors and lend the scheme some educational legitimacy, but this has failed to stem the angry 'save our school' campaigns nationwide.

A City spokesperson said: "We're very excited - we're looking forward to getting involved and helping the local community." TW & HH

Climate bill ‘not enough’?

The Government plans to reduce carbon emissions by 60 per cent by 2050, with the announcement of the Climate Change Bill.

David Miliband, the environment secretary, said: “Today’s bill is a big step forward in tackling climate change.” The environmental group Friends of the Earth has welcomed the move, although they are demanding the introduction of annual targets.

So far the Government has refused to set yearly targets for emission reductions, arguing that a long term approach will be more effective in tackling climate change. However, the bill is likely to be added to as it is debated

in parliament.

412 MPs, almost two-thirds, have signed an early day motion which calls for annual three per cent cut in emissions.

The Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats have joined forces in a bid to defeat the Government, although strong resistance already comes from rebellious Labour MPs.

202 of them have signed the motion, and are likely to be brave enough to vote against the Government when the bill is debated.

David Cameron, leader of the opposition, said he was “delighted” that the bill had been announced, but warned that it must be “watered down.” **EC**

City in Lord Mayor’s Show

City students waved and cheered to the crowds of London on Saturday as they took part in the annual Lord Mayor’s Show.

City’s float was an open-top bus, decorated with pictures of the students who were waving from the top and walking by its side. Around 30 took part.

“There was a real school-trip atmosphere,” said one student. “Everyone loved us, and we loved them. We had tons of fun.”

“The streets were lined with people the whole way. They were climbing up buildings and scaffolds just to see the parade.”

The show is held every year to mark the election of the new Lord Mayor of London – the ceremonial figurehead of the City who

is, incidentally, also City University’s chancellor.

There were over 140 floats in the parade, which moved slowly from Moorgate towards Bank, past Blackfriars and ultimately to the Victoria Embankment, before turning around and coming back again.

Groups with floats included the various traditional City livery companies, scouts and guides, charities, the police, the military and lots more.

The Lord Mayor’s Show has been held for 783 years. London Met was the only other London university to take part. **TW**

For more information, including details of every float, go to lordmayorsshow.org.

Following up...

Petitions for politics society

Last week’s *Inquirer* report on the policies of the student union drew strong comment from both faculty and students.

The *Inquirer* received numerous letters indignantly condemning the union’s policy, with one student calling the policy “a menace to society”.

In the meanwhile, international politics student Hollie Ryan, who is behind the latest attempt to set up a politics society, launched a petition to gather support.

Hollie and her colleagues plan to sign up “at least twice as many people as have voted in the student elections” – which, as we reported last week, shouldn’t be too difficult a task.

Various lecturers have approached the student union to comment on the article but have been rebuked, as the union maintains that stu-

dent affairs are not any of the faculty’s business.

We have received word that sociology lecturer Dr Liza Schuster has initiated a petition in her department to support Ms Ryan.

The union maintained its silence throughout the week when approached for comment, but has promised to deliver “something” by next week.

Student union president Tom Abbott has, however, pointed out that only elected student union officers are permitted to speak for the union on political matters.

We have also received reports of the union approaching different officials on campus to have the *Inquirer* shut down, with no notable results.

We will be sure to bring you all further developments. **DR**

Dalston theatre siege collapses

A military-style operation by police officers ended the nine-month occupation of the Dalston theatre by activists campaigning to stop the destruction of the building.

The occupiers of the building were taken by surprise by the immense police presence. No-body was harmed. **HH**

Swedish food at antiques mall

A Swedish Baroness has taken over Lola’s Restaurant on top of the Mall on Upper Street.

Lola’s, a favourite with Jamie Oliver, has been replaced with Upper Glas, which serves traditional Swedish food with a twist. **HH**

Baths protected

Ironmonger Row Baths near Old Street is set to become a grade II listed building.

Culture minister Tessa Jowell announced the decision, saying the baths were “a handsome, well-detailed example of an inter-war public baths”. **HH**

Smithfield under EU closure threat

Smithfield Market could face closure if it fails to meet new hygiene standards set by the EU.

If workers and stall owners do not pass inspections by the Food Standard Agency in the new year it could spell the end for meat trading at Smithfield. **HH**

Firework jobs in arson spree

A gang of youths wreaked havoc on Islington on bonfire night by setting a car alight and launching fireworks through letterboxes.

21 incidents of arson were reported across Islington in the same night. It was believed gangs of youths were fighting battles with fireworks. **HH**

TheInquirer
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The Inquirer needs you! We’re an independent newspaper - we can publish anything we like, from any student, whether you do journalism or not. Especially when it comes to news, we absolutely welcome contributions.

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Politkovskaya remembered

City honours murdered Russian war reporter

Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya, who was murdered last month, was remembered at City University on the cold Thursday evening of the 9 November.

The Oliver Thompson lecture theatre was half-full with students and a few staff.

The speakers included a Chechen politician, Anna's interpreter, and others who knew her and the Russia she reported on. Some of them knew her closely; some of them just had the privilege to meet her. They made up a panel of seven members.

"She was brave, honest, and a very warm person. She is an example to all of us," Elena Cook, Anna's former interpreter, said with pride.

Above the speakers, a huge picture of Anna was projected. She has an angelic face, but her body language shows a bulldog's determination. Her eyes show sadness, thoughtfulness, worry, calm, blood, and love. The thought of losing a colleague

who fought and sacrificed herself to make people's lives better is not easy to bear.

"Life in Russia as a journalist can be easy, but Anna didn't choose that way of living. She loved people and she was loved... by most of the people," said Akhmed Zakayev, former foreign minister of the Chechen government-in-exile.

After about two hours, the lecture ended and we all carried on with our lives. Just outside the hall, two of Anna's books lied on the table: 'A Dirty War' and 'Putin's Russia'.

Just as I was giving my money away, I stopped and asked if any money from the sale of these books was going to the Russian government. "No. Money is going to Anna's publisher who is in London", said one of the booksellers, smiling.

I don't know why, but I decided to trust them. When it comes to showing the true face of war, books like Anna's are as rare as red roses in December. **CA & VKJ**

Nato cover-up

The credibility of Nato's ISAF mission in south Afghanistan has started to collapse, thanks to Enrico Piovesana's report for peacereporter.net.

Piovesana's report claims that Nato forces are bombing villages, and sending in "special missions" afterwards. These missions involve peppering corpses with Kalashnikovs to pass off the killing as Taliban violence.

The consequences of this crime are devastating: survivors start to support and fight together with the real Taliban, exacting revenge for this so-called 'civilised way' of fighting terrorism.

This risks sparking a new popular revolt. A soldier in Kabul gives confirmation, claiming that everyone in the Army knows what's really going on. "When news papers report of 50 Taliban killed it is a farce." However, none has the courage to denounce it.

On September 13 ISAF claimed to have killed 510 Taliban fighters in two weeks, contrasting with local reports of 100 Taliban and 500 civilians dead. 'Operation Enduring Freedom' apparently killed 1,650 Taliban militants and 10 civilians. Local sources reject this. **CA**

Borat: the final word

What did City's Kazakhs think of the film?

When Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev won a landslide election in December last year, little did he know about what was brewing in the satirical mind of British comedian Sacha Baron-Cohen.

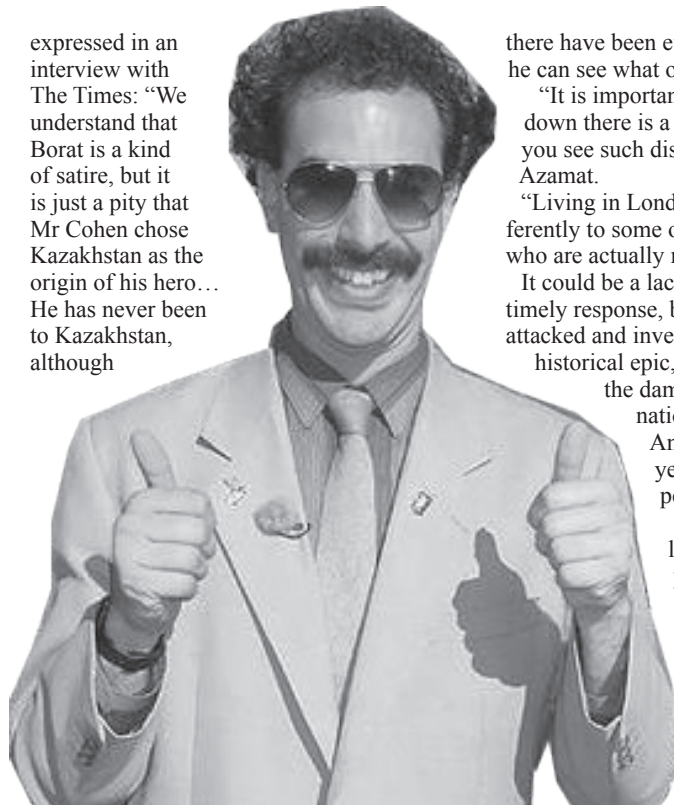
Kazakhstan's government tried to sue Cohen after the sleazy, mustachioed TV reporter Borat first appeared in *Da Ali G Show*, causing diplomatic outrage and unwanted controversy.

However, that was a microscopic taste of what was to come, as the film *Borat: Cultural Learnings of America Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan* was launched this month.

So, what do Kazakh students at City University think of this media spectacle? "I thought the film was funny. Of course you've got to remember that our reality is far from what the film portrays, and that Kazakhstan's economy is improving considerably," business management student Azamat Bayazitov explains.

No-one could not quite understand why the central Asian republic had become the subject of such mass-scale mockery, and that became evident as the Foreign Ministry spokesman, Yerzhan Ashykbayev,

expressed in an interview with *The Times*: "We understand that Borat is a kind of satire, but it is just a pity that Mr Cohen chose Kazakhstan as the origin of his hero... He has never been to Kazakhstan, although



there have been efforts to invite him so that he can see what our country is really like."

"It is important to understand that deep down there is a feeling of discomfort when you see such disgraceful jokes," says Azamat.

"Living in London I perceive the film differently to some of my friends in Kazakhstan who are actually really offended."

It could be a lack of self-irony, or just a timely response, but Kazakhstan has counter-attacked and invested \$53m in making the

historical epic, *Nomad*, in a bid to restore the damage inflicted upon the nation's reputation by Borat.

An English version is due next year in the US, the most expensive Kazakh picture ever.

Despite the sudden limelight, Azamat is adamant to put things right.

"We're from Kazakhstan and we'll prove people wrong! Bring anyone, we'll prove that our country is nothing like people think. We don't keep women in cages!" **KS**

TheInquirer

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'You are what you own'

New website lets you show off your possessions

Web 2.0 has arguably extended the social aspect of the Web a thousand fold.

With the likes of Flickr and YouTube, people can contribute to web content and share just about anything their creativity allows, from poetry to a Christmas wishlist.

Enter Zebo, which went public last month. The site is a hybrid between Myspace and eBay, which allows users to set up a profile on which they can brag about their worldly goods, compile a wishlist, and socialise with fellow consumers.

While some list only their main possessions, others take an inventory of their entire life, intangibles, body parts and brands included. Karly Mossberg, an 18 year old student, said

she likes to make notes in her online profile about the things she desires. "I'm obsessed with shopping and I'm also really organised," she said. "It's like my daily planner."

An inventory of strangers' possessions may sound about as interesting as an Argos order, yet some four million people have joined the free site since January. Most of them are aged between 16 and 25.

But why do users compile a list of their belongings - other than to report theft or to compose a rap song? Zebo is not merely a proclamation of the maxim "he who has the most toys wins" or the latest fad of bored teenagers.

Zebo shares many features with other social networking sites. Member profiles include

relationship status, interests and location, along with photographs and links to their friends. Members can also determine their "celebrity style" and appoint someone as their personal "shopping guru" to guide them to new purchases.

Mr de Souza, Zebo's founder, claims that "for the youth, you are what you own. They list these things because it defines them." Funny, I always thought you are what you eat.

Mr de Souza has plans to add more product links, sell advertising and regularly publish data about the habits and preferences of the young people who use the site.

For what it's worth, Zebo's members' only vice is coveting. Minimalists, however, should abstain. **SR**

The Inquirer comment

Now hang on just a second.

What is City doing getting involved in the school privatisation scheme known as 'city academies'? City says it tries to work with and support local schools, and yet here it is forcing one of the best to shut down.

Yes, Islington Green School is a good school - its GCSE results are certainly better than those of the average city academy. The parents don't want it to close, and the teachers' union voted against the closure almost unanimously. It is a mystery why it is being torn down to make way for some glass-fronted, business-backed monstrosity. City academies are supposed to replace failing schools, but Islington Green is a school on the way up - or at least it was, until the head was forced out last month.

It seems clear that the school's redundancies and rising class sizes now are a cynical attempt to drag the school down, so that before-and-after comparisons between the school and the academy will be more favourable.

The idea of 10-year-olds showing any special abilities in the academy's specialism - 'business and the professions' - is ludicrous, yet places will be set aside for these students. Combined with the so-called 'fair banding' system, this will allow the academy to exercise academic selection with impunity. Such a system will, as ever, be gamed by middle-class parents to the detriment of the disadvantaged.

Of course, the people who stand to gain are exactly those who vote Labour nowadays. The government openly admits that city academies are a stolen Thatcher policy - back then they were known as city technology colleges, but the concept and execution were exactly the same. And why should any student support a return to the conservative policies of the '80s?

Man about town Jesper Lof-



On Saturday I met up with some old friends at the swanky Mayfair dive Embassy.

I hadn't seen them in a long time and they hardly recognised me. We spent half an hour discussing how different I used to be.

Then their conversation turned to art and movies. I tried to contribute, but I struggled to focus on the words. They just floated into my ear and accumulated there, like wax. I felt like I didn't fit in anymore.

Fortunately, an Amazonian woman with tree-trunk thighs and a lethal boob-job soon stumbled past the table. She was almost as tall as me and somewhat drunk. "Have you seen a girl in a black cowboy hat?" she asked in a German accent.

"Hang out with us," I said. "We're more fun than your friends." It was a line I learned from my mate Will. And it worked. My friends looked on in shock as she sat down and asked for a cigarette.

For the rest of the night, the Amazonian and I talked. Every now and then, she'd drag me to the bathroom where I'd watch her inhale cocaine like a human Dustbuster.

"Do you watch *Sex and the City*?" she asked as we left the bathroom for the third time that night. "Sometimes," I told her. "I just got a pearl," she said, with Teutonic pride. "That's great," I said. I had no idea what a pearl was. "It's cool," she said. "With those little beads."

"Oh, the beads. Those things are great." I

was totally confused. But I liked listening to her, enjoying the mismatch between her harsh accent and her spongy lips. Maybe she was talking about anal beads. Good for her.

I stopped and leaned against the wall of the corridor as we were walking through. "How good of a kisser are you, from one to ten?" "I'm a ten," she said. "I like it soft, slow and teasing. I hate when someone rams their tongue down my throat." I looked at her. "Yeah, I hate that too," I said. "It's like snogging a cow."

"I give amazing blowjobs," she said. "Respect," I replied.

The next thing I knew she rammed her tongue down my throat, like a cow. Then she pulled away. She said talking about kissing got her excited.

I suggested we leave, as I was pretty certain I was guaranteed nailing. We hailed a cab and she gave the driver and address in Clapham. I guess we were going to her place. Back of the net.

She straddled me in the back seat and pulled a heavy breast out of her tank top. I guess I was supposed to suck it. As we arrived to her apartment she told me she was just going to put her pearl on.

As I waited I realized that I forgotten to say goodbye to my friends. In fact, I'd ignored them.

But when my new friend appeared in her pearl, I decided that it was worth it.

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