

## **Discussing the Conservative proposals on New Academies**

Forum for Change, facilitated by the Evangelical Alliance, concerns the long term strategy to mobilise the Christian community in influencing the key change drivers in our culture.

Education is a significant cultural driver. Education is an area where the majority of society accepts that Christians have a largely positive and successful role and record; which to some extent governments have recognised and wish to expand. The Forum for Change Education cluster aims to inform and invite the church to consider how, as part of their wider mission to be “salt” and “light” in society, they could be more involved in their local schools and colleges; offering a more distinctively Christian approach to the nurture of children’s lives and social interactions and to the pursuit of the common good through engaged citizenship.

Recently, the Education forum has given some thought to the education policies of the Conservative party and in particular their plan to create more than 220,000 school places in New Academies. Their proposals build on the Conservatives’ Green Paper, *‘Raising the bar, closing the gap: An action plan for schools to raise standards, create more good school places and make opportunity more equal’*.

The New Academies are envisaged to be smaller schools which are set up and run by existing educational providers, charities, trusts, voluntary groups, philanthropists and co-operatives. Since this constitutes a significant opportunity for the Christian community to engage with education, the paper written in response to the Conservatives’ draft education policy in January 2010,<sup>1</sup> is meant as a starting point for discussion.

The paper, published by the Jubilee Centre, summarises the most important points of Conservative education policy, before giving an overview of some of the major principles of Christian education. Moreover, it looks at the implications and how Christians might help found and shape the new schools created by this initiative. And finally, the discussion document raises the question of how to build a moral dimension into a curriculum.

To access a copy of the discussion document ‘Conservative Party Education Policy: Opportunities for Christians’ go to: [http://www.jubilee-centre.org/resources/new\\_academies\\_new\\_opportunities\\_an\\_assessment\\_of\\_conservative\\_party\\_education\\_policy](http://www.jubilee-centre.org/resources/new_academies_new_opportunities_an_assessment_of_conservative_party_education_policy)

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<sup>1</sup> See [http://www.conservatives.com/News/News\\_stories/2010/01/~~/media/Files/Draft%20Manifesto/DraftEducationManifesto.ashx](http://www.conservatives.com/News/News_stories/2010/01/~~/media/Files/Draft%20Manifesto/DraftEducationManifesto.ashx) (accessed 19 January 2010).