



Tower Hamlets

# Class Struggle

A Workers' Liberty education workers' bulletin

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## Support Central Foundation's strike! Solidarity can win!

By a Tower Hamlets education worker

**Teachers and support staff at Central Foundation Girls School in East London will strike on Wednesday 25 April as part of a battle to resist redundancies and pay cuts.**

The school's management announced a restructure in January 2012 that involves job losses and pay cuts of up to 10% for some support staff, and an increase in teachers' workload; current National Union of Teachers policy recommends an 80-20 balance between contact time and non-contact time – CFGS management want to reduce the time teachers have to do marking and admin work. The pay cuts for support staff will have a knock-on effect on pensions.

### PAYING FOR PRIVATISATION

**Bosses are claiming they have to make these cuts because the school's budget is in deficit.**

The deficit is because the school is a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) school; every year it has to pay huge bills to private companies for running the PFI scheme. The scheme itself is in deficit, so the school has to make it up. Staff are paying with their jobs and wages for mismanagement and financial incompetence of private companies.

The cuts are also about taking on the unions, which are relatively well-organised at CFGS. Management feel that if they can beat the unions now, they will be able to carry out future cuts with little opposition.

A recent letter from the Chair of the Board of Governors also argued that the cuts were necessary to allow the school to "compete in the context of a deregulated education system". That gives the strike a much wider significance; as Tory plans to increase the number of Academies, Trust Schools and Free Schools continue, the CFGS cuts show how all education workers – even those working at schools that remain within community or Local Education Authority control – suffer from deregulation and marketisation.

The CFGS strike also shows the effect fighting back can have on working-class confidence. A few weeks ago morale in the school was absolutely rock-bottom; now it's sky high. There have been mass meetings to discuss the strike with up to 100 members of staff attending. By taking a stand, and by running a campaign that's allowed workers to get active, CFGS unions have galvanised workers and brought them together. When industrial disputes are run actively, democratically, and led by members they can foster enormous solidarity and unity.

A mass meeting will follow Wednesday's pickets, which will set the next strike date.

### GRASSROOTS CONTROL

The strike is being led and controlled by those involved in it, not by unaccountable officials from Unison or the National Union of Teachers. Workers plan to take a series of one-day strikes through the exam period, before moving all-out action once exams are over.

During the exam period, unions will exercise a level of workers' control over the running of revision classes and exams themselves. Teachers are discussing with union reps how to run essential revision classes without undermining industrial action, and union reps are helping some teachers make arrangements to run revision classes off premises in order to avoid breaking the strike.

If the cuts at CFGS go ahead, it will give the green light to similar cuts at other schools across Tower Hamlets. But if the workers win, it will inspire enormous confidence for other education workers facing similar struggles.

**The workplace solidarity and channels of grassroots control that have already begun to develop at CFGS will be essential if that victory is to be achieved.**

Workers' Liberty is a revolutionary socialist organisation active in the British labour movement fighting for an alternative to capitalism and Stalinism based on common ownership, democracy and workers' control. *Class Struggle* is produced by our members, supporters and friends who work in education in Tower Hamlets. To get involved with producing the bulletin, or to take copies for your workplace, email [awl@workersliberty.org](mailto:awl@workersliberty.org) with the subject line 'Tower Hamlets Class Struggle'.