

Free Schools: Bradford's Kings Academy Leads the Way

On a windy hillside in Lidget Green, a bleak area of Bradford, is a light-industrial estate, one of those places you would drive past without noticing. There is a sign by its entrance gate that reads embassy freight transit store: logistics, but it is clear that the site is being run down. Some of the buildings are empty, and like the rest of Lidget Green it has the feel of a place that might have seen better days. But to Sajid Hussain, this is a place of dreams.

As we bump along the service road – half tarmac, half exposed cobbles – he is talking about the things that have been lost. 'I have to say, there aren't many employment opportunities here. There's no service sector. There's no manufacturing. Definitely a community that's struggling.'

But over the next 18 months, Hussain hopes that, as the principal of the Kings Science Academy, due to open this month, he will bring new life not only to the former Northside Industrial Estate but also to this whole area. Indeed, both Hussain and David Cameron are hoping that Kings, and a dozen or so other new 'free schools' also opening this month, will in addition transform the nation's education system.

Before last year's general election, Cameron spelt out his plan for this new breed of school in a speech to a group of parents and teachers seven miles from here, in Birkenshaw. The schools, he said, would be part of his 'Big Society' notion, and would give power to the people who mattered – parents, teachers, local communities – to open schools and run them in the way they saw fit.

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