

St Paul's protesters invited into schools to lecture teenagers on campaigning

By [Sarah Harris](#)

The group behind the anti-capitalist protests outside St Paul's Cathedral is to be invited into schools to teach pupils how to start their own campaigns.

Teenagers will learn about the Occupy movement, which has for months blighted London with its 'Tent City' protest, as part of their citizenship lessons.

Critics have attacked the move, warning head teachers it is 'dangerous'. It is feared that protesters could use the opportunity to indoctrinate youngsters and gain fresh recruits.



A blight on the capital: The 'Tent City' protest at St Paul's - and now those involved are being invited to give lectures on 'campaigning'

The Bishop's Stortford High School in Hertfordshire is the first to sign up and has invited Occupy to explain what it does to a group of 150 sixth-formers next Friday.

Simon Etheridge, head of citizenship, said: 'I invited Occupy to stimulate debate and discussion among the students about their politics and their world at the moment, as well as their views, for and against, about the protest outside St Paul's Cathedral.'

'This will be balanced by future speakers. We are not here to "corrupt the young" – we host all respectable and appropriate political parties.'



Shout it out: Demonstrators from Occupy London protest on the steps of St Paul's Cathedral - and they could soon be in our schools

Head teacher Andrew Goulding said yesterday: 'These debates help to develop analytical and critically thinking citizens who want to engage with the issues of the day. Occupy have raised some fundamental questions for debate.'

Occupy protester Jamie Kelsey-Fry, a former English teacher who is leading the outreach campaign, said more schools have expressed interest.

He said: ‘It’s young people learning the tools to create their own campaigns, to have a measurable impact on their communities. ‘We’re not teaching them to put tents outside churches.’

Mr Kelsey-Fry insisted that pupils will not be indoctrinated with Occupy’s beliefs, adding: ‘We want them to further their own ways of engagement. It’s not a recruiting situation.’



Dedicated: Severe weather didn't put off the Occupy movement - but their future 'roof' could soon be that of a school

The Occupy London protest against corporate greed set up dozens of tents outside St Paul’s in October and led to a week-long closure of the cathedral and the resignations of three senior Church officials.

A High Court judge ruled this week that the camp was a ‘public

nuisance' and an eviction was necessary for the 'prevention of disorder and crime', but the protesters are appealing against the decision.

Chris McGovern, chairman of the Campaign for Real Education, said: 'I think schools should be open to all opinions but, in this particular case, I think it is something that is too controversial... given the emotion surrounding it at the moment.

'I don't think schools should be dabbling in current political issues. It's a dangerous area for them to get involved in.