

CITY ACADEMIES

schools to make a difference

**A PROSPECTUS FOR SPONSORS AND OTHER
PARTNERS**



City Academies, to replace seriously failing schools, will be established by partnerships involving the Government, and voluntary sector, church and business sponsors. They will offer a real change. The aim will be to raise standards by breaking the cycle of under-performance and low expectations.”

David Blunkett, Secretary of State for Education and Employment
speech to Social Market Foundation, 15 March 2000

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City Academies

We believe that all children and young people, whatever their background and wherever they live, can achieve high standards. Our ambition is to make that happen.

We need a dramatic increase in the number of successful schools in our cities. Far too many schools are under performing in terms of the outcomes for their pupils. Many of these schools are working very hard and doing good things in difficult circumstances. But that is not enough if the outcomes for the young people do not fit them for further education and the world of work. No single approach will solve all problems, but radical innovation in the creation of new schools is one option. City Academies will provide for this.

There are many reasons why schools fail. Many will be affected by deprivation and high pupil mobility. For some it will be a failure of management and leadership. Poor support from the education authority may be a factor. In some cases low aspirations and a poor ethos in the school will be to blame.

What unites them all is that they need support to achieve more highly.

The support must meet their needs. Some will need direct intervention, others will need to be challenged, and yet others may only need more encouragement or recognition. We know that change is possible. Not all schools in difficult circumstances perform poorly. Many do well, as we illustrate in this prospectus, and some are an inspiration. For the weakest schools, the Government has established a Fresh Start policy, involving closure and re-opening under new management. We now believe there is a place for a more radical approach. We are providing substantial resources for the establishment of City Academies. These Academies will be publicly funded independent schools with private and voluntary sector sponsorship and management, tackling the problems of poor performance with greater freedom than currently available to maintained schools. Business, the churches and the voluntary sector are all potential sponsors and partners for City Academies.

We know from the experience of Specialist Schools and Education Action Zones that schools can benefit from involvement with business and other non-government partners. This partnership can bring a new focus and sharpness to the running of schools, to the great benefit of the children in their care. Business also has much to contribute to both the basic curriculum and curriculum enrichment activity, and to effective work experience programmes. City Academies will also take account of the best lessons of City Technology Colleges and Charter Schools in the United States.

Poorly performing schools reinforce inequality and disadvantage. Many in local authorities,

the business community, and in the churches and voluntary sector, as well as the schools themselves, share our determination to bring equality of opportunity to all our children. City Academies are one way that they can help achieve this goal. The Academies will not bring overnight success. They will involve hard work and gradual improvement, but we believe they have the potential to make a major contribution to improving opportunities for all our children. We look forward to developing proposals with potential sponsors and partners.

[signed David Blunkett]

May 2000

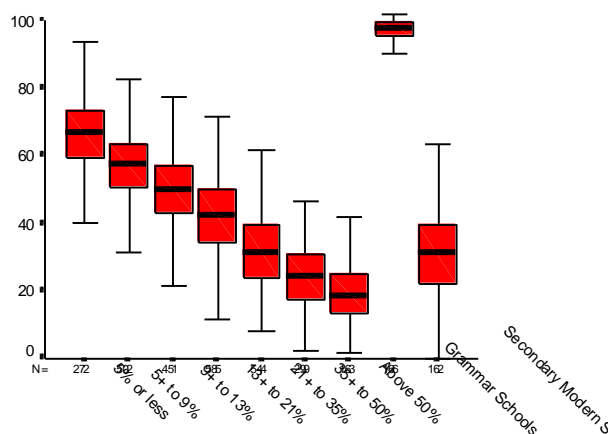
Section 1

Raising Achievement in the Cities

Raising achievement in our schools is the government's top priority. Nothing is more important to the future of our country. There has been much progress. We have seen improvements in literacy and numeracy in primary schools. Our policies under the *Excellence in Cities* banner have started to tackle the educational problems of the major cities. But there is a long way to go in improving standards in our poorest performing schools, particularly in the cities.

One in seven secondary schools have 25% or less of their pupils with 5 A* to Cs at GCSE. Far too many of these are below 15% and a large proportion of them are in the most heavily populated areas of the country. However, deprivation need not lead to low performance, as demonstrated by the chart below relating school performance to the proportion of pupils from low-income families entitled to free school meals. While the chart shows that overall there is an association between levels of deprivation and school performance it also shows the wide variations in performance between schools with similar intakes. Very many schools in challenging areas succeed in achieving high standards, and government policy is targeted at increasing the number substantially.

Performance at GCSE/GNVQ in maintained mainstream schools by FSM benchmark bands, 1999



FSM Band

We all know that it can be done:

Langdon School in Newham has 42% of pupils eligible for free school meals (the National average is 18.1%), a large number with English second language, and a significant range of pupils with special educational needs. The school, which is now a specialist Sports College, not only achieves well above the 25% mark on the 5 or more A* to C GCSE performance indicator but continues to improve its performance, from 36% in 1996 to 43% in 1999.

Shorefields Community School in Liverpool has some 60% of pupils eligible for free school meals. Between 1998 and 1999 it nearly tripled the number of pupils getting 5 or more A* to C GCSEs, from 7% to 20%, and enrolment has tripled since 1994.

St. Matthew's RC High School in Manchester, now a Technology College, achieved 41% 5 or more A* to C GCSEs in 1999 and achieves high levels of attendance. 42% of pupils are eligible for free school meals.

Bacon's City Technology College in Southwark has 35% of pupils eligible for free school meals. In 1992 only 7% of pupils achieved 5 or more A* to C GCSEs. In 1999 that figure was 54% and the school now has a flourishing sixth form. This year 54 students have been offered places in higher education.

These are only examples, but we need many more such schools. City Academies are one way of establishing them.

Section 2

Key Features of a City Academy

City Academies will be:

- all-ability schools which cater for 11-16 or 11-18 year olds, according to the pattern of local provision;
- schools situated in major urban areas, taking over from schools with poor track records;
- schools registered as independent schools, subject to inspection by OfSTED, but charging no fees;
- schools with state of the art facilities (whether in new build or refurbished premises);
- schools at the heart of their communities, sharing their facilities with other schools and the wider community;
- promoters making a contribution towards capital costs of the order of 20%; for a new build school this might require a contribution of £2million;
- promoters who will own and run the schools, and receive Government grants on conditions agreed with the Secretary of State;
- schools with a broad curriculum but with a special emphasis in one area of the curriculum, such as science and technology, and an emphasis on the needs of the individual pupil;
- schools developing in their pupils the qualities of enterprise, self-reliance and responsibility which young people need for adult life;
- schools aiming to secure the highest possible standards of achievement, never satisfied with past levels of achievement.

The following sections explain some of these features in more detail.

Sponsorship

Sponsoring bodies are invited to apply to establish and maintain a City Academy. They may be businesses, individuals, churches or voluntary bodies, or partnerships within or across these categories, willing and able to establish a school for the purpose. They must be able to make a contribution of around 20% of the capital costs of an Academy, which could mean up to around £2million.

In the first instance we are particularly interested in sponsors able to begin immediate work on pathfinder projects. However, we also welcome interest from sponsors looking at a longer timescale.

Management and Organisation

City Academies will be established and maintained by their sponsoring bodies, normally setting up a charitable company for the purpose. Each sponsoring body will agree with the Secretary of State for Education and Employment a 'scheme of

government' for the school which will provide for board of governors and the main rules of management for the business of the school.

Sponsors will be given considerable freedom over management structures and processes, and other features such as the length of the school day, terms and year. Academies will be expected to offer all pupils significant out of school hours learning activities and to encourage the participation of partners in mentoring, curriculum delivery, and work experience.

Academies will set targets against agreed performance indicators.

Staffing

Appointments to the new school will be a matter for the Academy but the Academy will need to comply with employment law. If their employment is not automatically transferred, all staff should, if they wish, be considered for appointment at the new school. Funding will be made available if costs are incurred by reason of redundancy payments properly payable on the closure of the old school and non-appointment at the new school. Advice will be given about the management of staff recruitment and redundancy matters.

All teachers at City Academies should have Qualified Teacher Status.

It will be the responsibility of the Academy to agree levels of pay and conditions of service with its employees, and to employ appropriate staff numbers.

Curriculum and Assessment

City Academies will provide a broad and balanced curriculum, based on the requirements of the National Curriculum. However they will be expected to devise innovative ways of delivering and developing the curriculum to help raise pupil attainment, and they will be able to seek the Secretary of State's approval to disapply parts of the National Curriculum for all or some pupils.

We will want each City Academy to develop as a centre of excellence in at least one area of the curriculum. In many cases this will be science and technology but we expect to allow other specialisms, such as languages, the performing, visual and media arts, and sport.

National KS3 tests in English, mathematics and science will be taken by all pupils, and KS3 teacher assessment will be carried out for all other National Curriculum subjects studied by the pupil. City Academy pupils will be assessed by GCSE and/or GNVQ (or other means approved by the Secretary of State) at KS4.

Admissions

Where an Academy replaces an existing school, suitable arrangements will have been made to provide for the education of all pupils from the school being replaced.

City Academies will be all-ability schools and will have admissions policies which are

consistent with admissions law and the admissions Codes of Practice which apply to maintained schools. This includes that admissions criteria must be clear, objective and fair, and must comply with equal opportunities legislation; they must take up to agreed pupil numbers; must admit pupils of different abilities, including special needs pupils; and must publish over-subscription criteria, which set out clearly and unambiguously how places will be allocated where applications exceed places available. Where banding by ability is used this must relate to the range of abilities of those who apply. Proposed admissions arrangements should be circulated for comment to other admission authorities in the area and will be subject to the agreement of the Secretary of State, who will take account of the views expressed. City Academies should participate in the local admissions forum and establish independent appeals panels.

City Academies will be able to admit up to 10% of pupils to each new year 7 cohort on the basis of aptitude for the school's specialism. Like other schools, they will be free to set their own criteria for admission to the sixth form, when they have one.

Information and Communications Technology

Building on the experience of the Specialist Schools programme and the City Learning Centres (being developed as part of the *Excellence in Cities* initiative), City Academies will use ICT as appropriate to support all aspects of learning, and the management of learning. This resource will also be seen to support activities beyond the normal school day and in partnership with the wider community.

Section 3

Sponsoring a City Academy

Who may sponsor a City Academy ?

We are looking for sponsors with a commitment to the highest standards of education, for all our children, determined to succeed in helping those currently served by some of our poorest performing schools.

Businesses, churches and voluntary bodies interested in sponsoring and managing a City Academy, are invited to discuss their ideas with the DfEE. Potential sponsors may be involved in running existing schools, but need have no direct educational experience. When they lack such experience, they will of course wish to engage experienced advisers, and when appropriate the DfEE will be happy to advise on this.

Promoters may have a particular location or even school in mind, or they may wish to talk to DfEE or other partners about a suitable location.

Where will they be located ?

Academies will generally replace an existing poorly performing school, or be part of a proposal to tackle a group of under-performing schools. Where the demand for new places justifies it, a City Academy may be established without the closure of an existing school.

Schools already under consideration for Fresh Start may be appropriate candidates. Under certain circumstances, it may be possible to consider schools which are already Fresh Starters.

Major refurbishment of existing buildings should be the starting point for considering the capital project but a new build solution will be considered in certain circumstances, for example, where a promoter makes a convincing case that existing premises would be inadequate or unsuitable even with major refurbishment, or that major refurbishment could be shown to result in similar costs to new build.

The Secretary of State will not consider proposals to build a new school which would result in additional surplus places, but would consider building a new school in an area of poor performing schools either as a replacement for an existing school or schools, or where there was a good case for meeting additional demand for places.

At this stage, we will be particularly interested in proposals for Academies within *Excellence in Cities* areas, but other areas, especially those with a concentration of poor performing schools, will be considered. Areas currently re-organising secondary education may be especially well suited. We will be looking to establish a good geographical spread across England and will be particularly keen to see pathfinder projects in at least some of the major conurbations.

Education partners

Sponsors will seek to work in collaboration with local education partners, including the LEA and other schools, primary and secondary. We recognise that these arrangements will work best when there is broad unity of purpose. There is every reason for all parties to work together in raising standards of achievement for the good of all the pupils. The Government intends to take reserve powers to facilitate the transfer of sites from LEAs to City Academies.

Section 4

Funding City Academies

Capital

As stated in section 2, sponsoring bodies will provide around 20% of the initial and on-going capital costs and undertake to provide a similar proportion of future capital costs. The DfEE will provide the balance of capital needs.

It would be difficult to provide the first Academies as full scale PPP/PFI projects within the timescale for pathfinder projects. However, we would consider proposals for PPP/PFI contracts for the operation and maintenance of buildings and equipment.

Revenue

Subject to the outcome of the Year 2000 Spending Review, we will fund each City Academy at a level comparable to the funding of other schools in the local education authority in which it is situated, taking full account of the hold back by the LEA for services for which the Academy will be responsible, and with the addition of a per pupil grant equivalent to that payable to specialist schools in the maintained sector. From September 2000 this will be £123 per pupil per year up to 1000 pupils, with further funding available for pupil numbers above 1200.

These are substantial resources and mean that City Academies should benefit from a level of funding which would enable them to make strong starts and develop innovative ideas in practice.

There will be no requirement for sponsors to provide a contribution to running costs. Transitional funding will be available, for example to cover project costs and temporary accommodation needs in order to free sites for conversion or new build.

Funding Agreements

The Secretary of State will enter into a funding agreement for each Academy. Funding agreements will include provision for the following:

- capital expenditure arrangements (sponsorship and grant)
- revenue expenditure arrangements (grant)
- conditions of grant
- disposal of assets
- financial and accounting requirements
- pupil numbers
- admission arrangements and appeals
- exclusions
- teachers' pay and conditions
- curriculum and assessment

- performance indicators
- period for termination
(7 years' notice by either party, or on breach of agreement)

Section 5

Application Process, Contacts and Further Information

Interested parties are invited to submit proposals to the Secretary of State. For those interested in developing one of the pathfinder projects, a written expression of interest should be provided by 7 July. This should take the form of a letter giving such information as the potential sponsor considers appropriate. We will then hold discussions with a view to sponsors submitting outline proposals by mid August. Such proposals will be handled on a 'fast track' basis.

There is no closing date at present for expressions of interest for projects with a longer time horizon.

Potential sponsors are invited to discuss their outline ideas with officials at the DfEE. Contacts are listed below.

Following discussions, the precise form and detail of proposals will be for the sponsoring body to decide, but it will be important to consider giving information about:

- the sponsoring body or partnership
- the school or schools to become a City Academy (when it is intended to replace existing schools)
- contacts with the local education authority and other local education partners (e.g. nearby secondary schools and local primary schools)
- the proposed capital project
- proposed project management arrangements
- proposed specialist subject area in the curriculum

In due course, sponsoring bodies will need also to make proposals about the following:

- details of the capital works, an estimate of costs, how the work is to be procured and a project timeline
- the capital sponsorship to be provided, both initially and for any subsequent capital expenditure
- management structure of the Academy including the proposed composition of the governing body
- curriculum and any innovative features envisaged at this stage
- the length of the school day, terms and year, including out-of-school activities
- participation of private sector partners in mentoring, curriculum delivery and work experience
- performance indicators and targets
- arrangements for staff recruitment, and for running the school
- pay and conditions of service for teachers

- pupil numbers and admission arrangements and criteria
- working with other schools and the wider community

Care must be taken to take account of equal opportunities considerations, including consideration for the particular needs of those ethnic minority pupils at risk of underachievement and those with English as an additional language. Care should also be taken over physical and curriculum access for those pupils with disabilities.

All proposals should demonstrate thinking which identifies the school at the heart of the community and the importance of partnership with parents.

Assessment of Proposals (after mid August)

DfEE will be responsible for the assessment of all proposals, making recommendations to the Secretary of State for Education and Employment who will make the final decision.

The Government aims to agree by the end of this summer the names of the first sponsors and schools to be pathfinder projects under the City Academies programme. DfEE will work with applicants before that date to ensure the best possible proposals are taken forward.

Monitoring will be undertaken throughout the design, tender, contracting and construction stages of projects, based on reports by the professional advisers of successful sponsors, to ensure projects are on budget.

Contact

Please address any enquiries, or proposals for City Academies, to:

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Department for Education and Employment
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3BT

Telephone: 020 7925 5382
E-mail: julian.butcher@dfee.gov.uk

Architects and Buildings: Mukund Patel
telephone: 020 7273 6151
or e-mail: mukund.patel@dfee.gov.uk

Useful DfEE publications:

- Code of Practice on School Admissions (reference: CPSA)
- Code of Practice on School Admission Appeals (reference: SAACP)

These are available from:
DfEE Publications Centre
PO Box 5050
Annesley
Nottingham
NG15 0DJ
Tel: 0845 602 2260
Fax: 0845 603 3360
e-mail: dfee@prologistics.co.uk

Useful publication by the Technology Colleges Trust:

- The seven habits of highly effective schools; Tooley and Howes, TC Trust, 1999.
Available from:

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