Building your Academy's brand

Academies Communications Toolkit

Contents

Creating your Academy's brand

We live and work in a world awash with brands and selling messages. People expect all sorts of concepts to be presented to them in easily recognisable and identifiable packages.

It doesn't mean that your Academy should be considered in the same way as a new brand of soap powder. 'Brand' doesn't necessarily mean commercial, gimmicky or faddish – for example, the NHS and the BBC are both deeply trusted and respected brands.

When your Academy launches, you need to harness every means of communication available to signal to your community the change it represents, and to win their hearts and minds.

Summing up everything the Academy stands for in consistent and recognisable branding is a valuable way of helping to achieve this.

This guide explains how to build your brand from the inside out, so that it showcases everything you believe in and aspire to, and is recognised and understood by your community.

If you intend to engage a design and/or branding agency from the outset, this guide will give you an easy-to-follow insight into how they work. If you plan to do some of the branding work yourself, it will help you to plan and organise your thoughts.

The heart and soul of your brand

When people think of brands, they often think of logos, jingles, or adverts. These are certainly all outward expressions of brands. But for branding to be successful, these elements need to stem from a consistent set of beliefs and values.

It's important to set these things down, because they then act as the code for how all the external elements of the brand will be created. This is often referred to as the 'brand platform'. It is the DNA that will determine how your brand looks and feels.
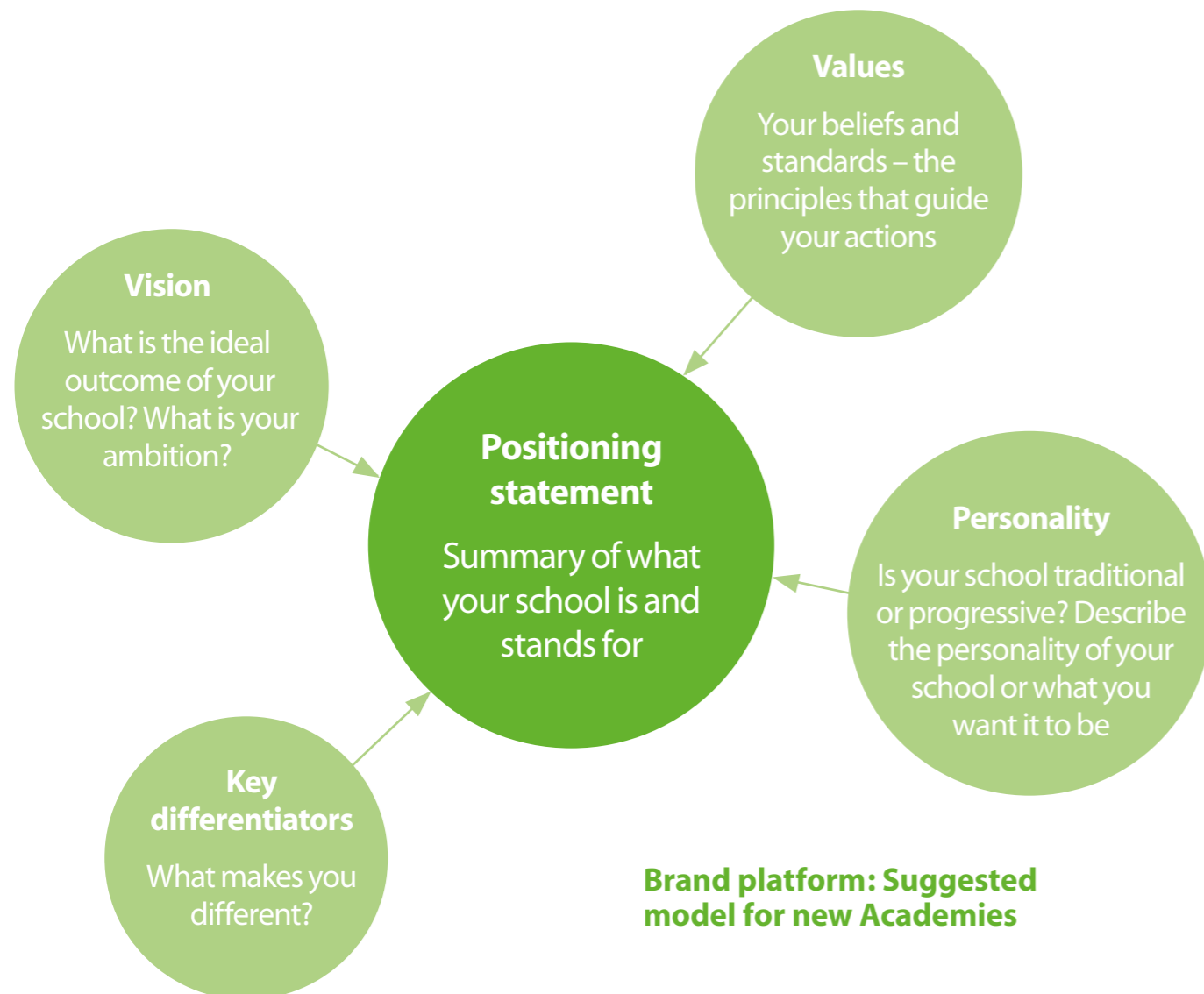
If you are a principal, Academy sponsor, local authority or project manager, it is more than likely that the ethos that will lie at the heart and soul of your Academy is already indelibly imprinted on your mind.

You will know what you want the school to achieve (vision). What beliefs and standards will guide all of your actions (values). What makes you different and special (key differentiators)… and in what manner you are going to deliver them all (personality).

By setting all this down in a brand platform you are creating a tool which will help you, and/or a design and branding agency, to really understand how your Academy should be expressed through design and writing.

Tips:
• Be brutally honest.
• Be brief – a brand platform is where you crystallise your thinking, and get to the kernel of your beliefs. If you attempt to include every cough and sneeze, you will dilute the effectiveness of this tool.
• Use plain English (if it isn't language you'd use when speaking to your mother, neighbour or friend, leave it out).

"We are very strong in brand. We have introduced the Academy sponsor's motto, 'No goal is beyond our reach'." Academy principal

"The idea that you can achieve whatever you want to achieve is at the heart of our brand." Academy principal

Vision

What is the ideal outcome of your school? What is your ambition?

Values

Your beliefs and standards – the principles that guide your actions

Personality

Is your school traditional or progressive? Describe the personality of your school or what you want it to be

Key differentiators

What makes you different?

Positioning statement

Summary of what your school is and stands for

Brand platform: Suggested model for new Academies

So what will it look like?

Having established what's at the heart and soul of your brand, you'll now need to develop this DNA into a consistent look and feel. This is what's often called a brand's 'identity'.

The expression of your brand will be both visual and verbal – what it looks like, and the kind of words it uses. Design and language should work together, each being crafted to accurately express the unique character and personality of your Academy. This guide looks at the visual first, and then verbal, but in reality, you'll be doing elements of each simultaneously.
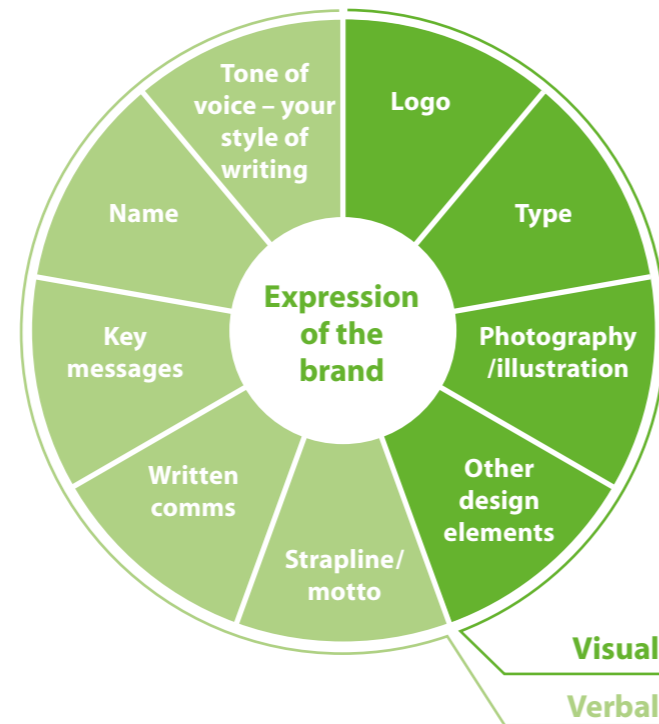
Some commercial brands also use audio signatures as part of the brand identity. Like the 'do do do do!' of Intel. We're not aware of an educational establishment with this kind of branding – but if you know of one, or are considering it yourself, we'd be very interested to hear about it!

A brand is so much more than a logo. In fact, as this diagram shows, your logo will be just one of the many facets of your Academy's brand.

"Remember, it's more than just a logo. It's about how you package the whole culture and ethos of the Academy. It's all about what you want to convey to the community." Project manager

All the elements of your Academy's language and design should work together to present a consistent, unified set of messages to your community about what you stand for.

Brand expression – identity

Expression of the brand

Logo · Type · Photography/illustration · Other design elements · Strapline/motto · Written comms · Key messages · Name · Tone of voice – your style of writing

Visual
Verbal

The role of the Academy sponsor's brand

The relationship of the Academy with the Academy sponsor will have a large impact on how the school is branded.

All Academy sponsors input heavily into their school's brand platform, which in turn affects the design and language the Academy adopts.

In the case of individual Academy sponsors, their branding must be considered and depending on what you feel is appropriate for your school, included on literature and signage.

In the case of multiple Academy sponsors such as Oasis Community Learning and the United Learning Trust, this will translate into the Academy sponsor organisations' branding predominating.

The following guidance assumes that you are creating your branding from scratch.
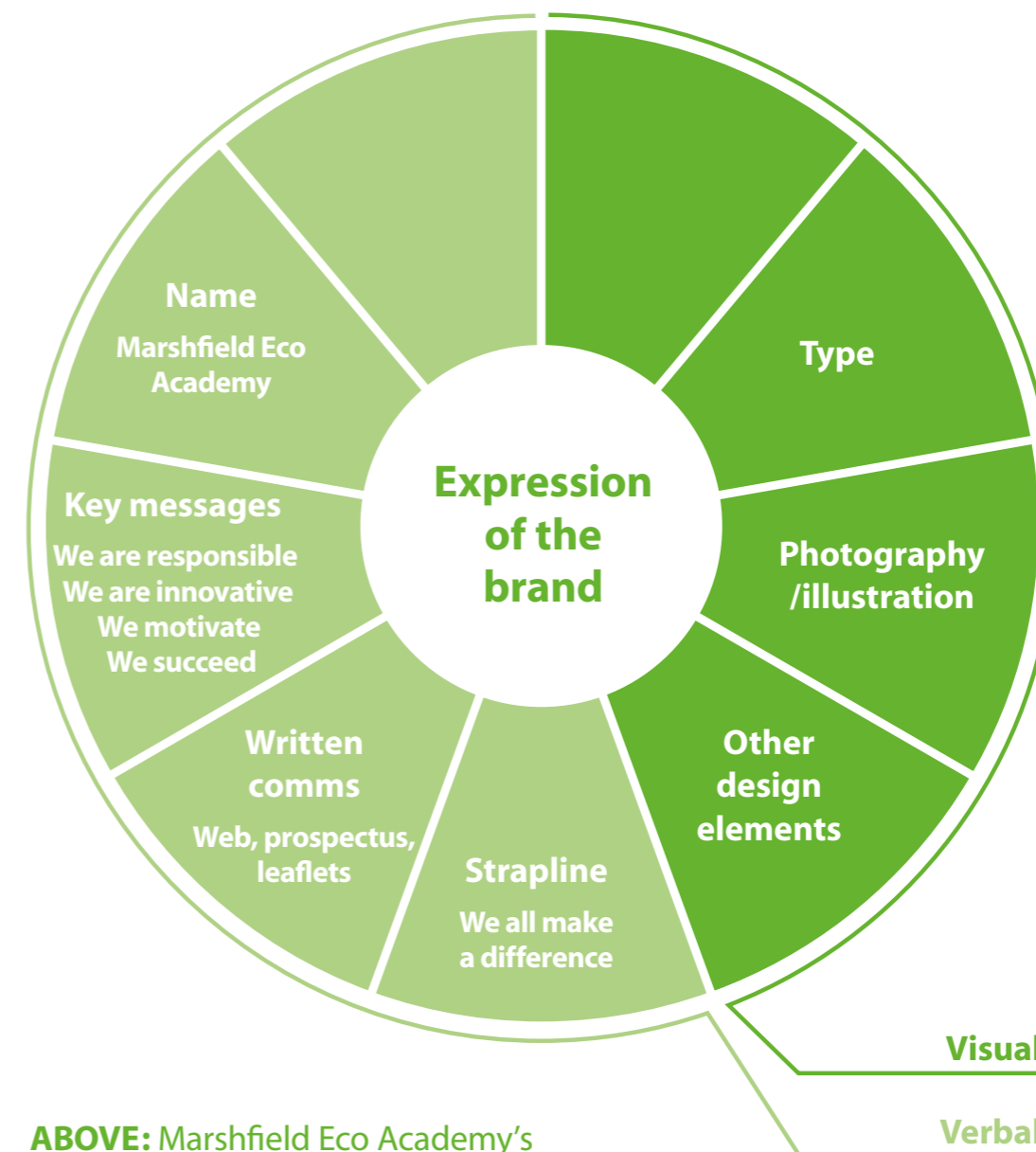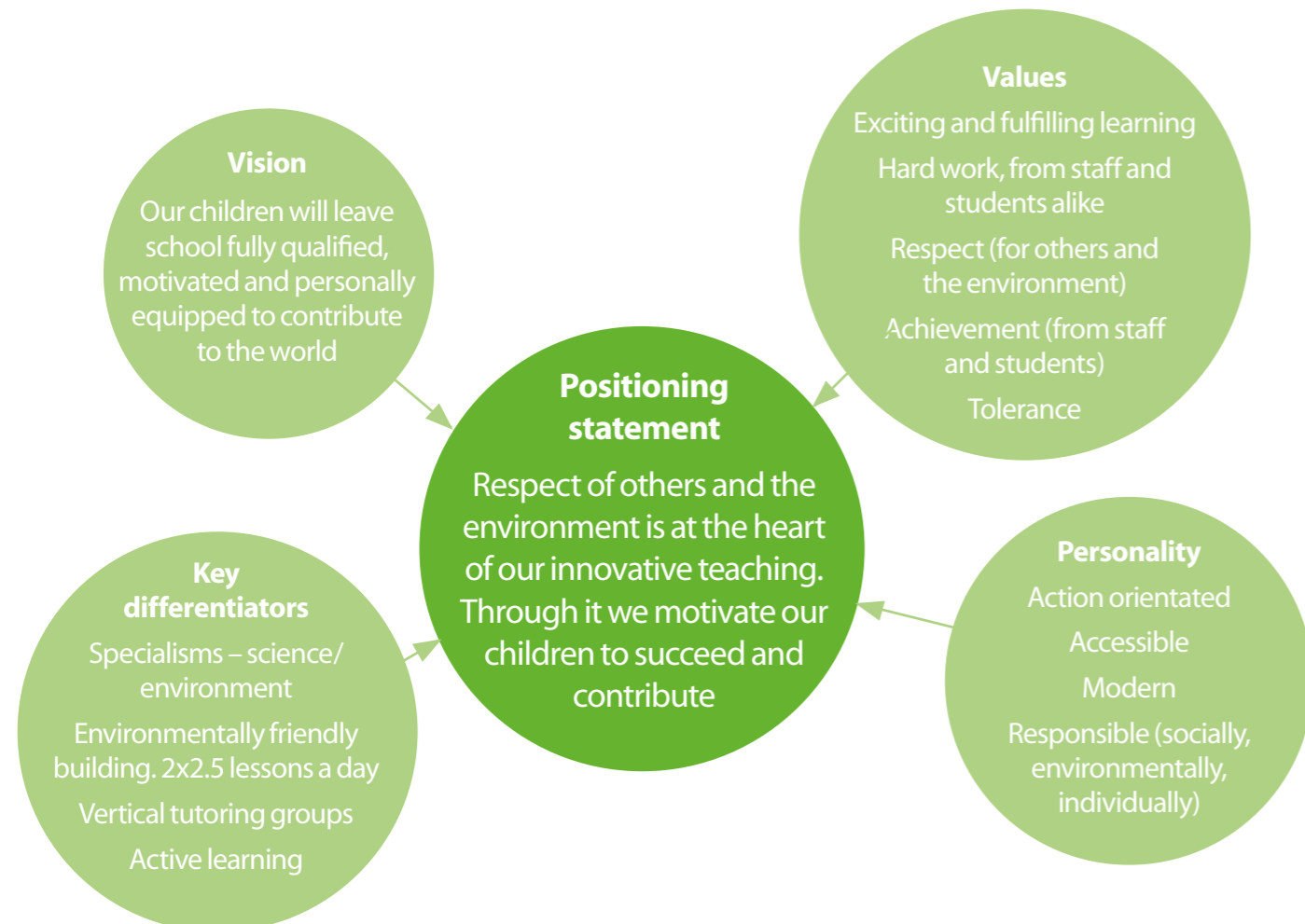
How it might work

That's the theory – this is an example of how it might work in real life.

Marshfield Eco Academy is an entirely made up school. It has been created to show how the branding process could work.

Marshfield Eco Academy is sponsored by a university, and has a major environmental charity as a partner.

Its principal, Mrs Rebecca Lyndal, has worked with the Academy sponsors and stakeholders to create an ethos which places respect in the environment and for other people at its heart. Its specialism is science and the environment.

The school's buildings have been innovatively designed to have a very low carbon footprint, and students will be actively encouraged to consider the environmental impact of all their activities.

Vision
Our children will leave school fully qualified, motivated and personally equipped to contribute to the world

Key differentiators
Specialisms – science/ environment
Environmentally friendly building. 2x2.5 lessons a day
Vertical tutoring groups
Active learning

Positioning statement
Respect of others and the environment is at the heart of our innovative teaching. Through it we motivate our children to succeed and contribute

Values
Exciting and fulfilling learning
Hard work, from staff and students alike
Respect (for others and the environment)
Achievement (from staff and students)
Tolerance

Personality
Action orientated
Accessible
Modern
Responsible (socially, environmentally, individually)

Expression of the brand

Name
Marshfield Eco Academy

Key messages
We are responsible
We are innovative
We motivate
We succeed

Written comms
Web, prospectus, leaflets

Strapline
We all make a difference

Type

Photography /illustration

Other design elements

Visual

Verbal

ABOVE: Marshfield Eco Academy's brand expression

LEFT: Marshfield Eco Academy's brand platform

Creating your Academy's look and feel
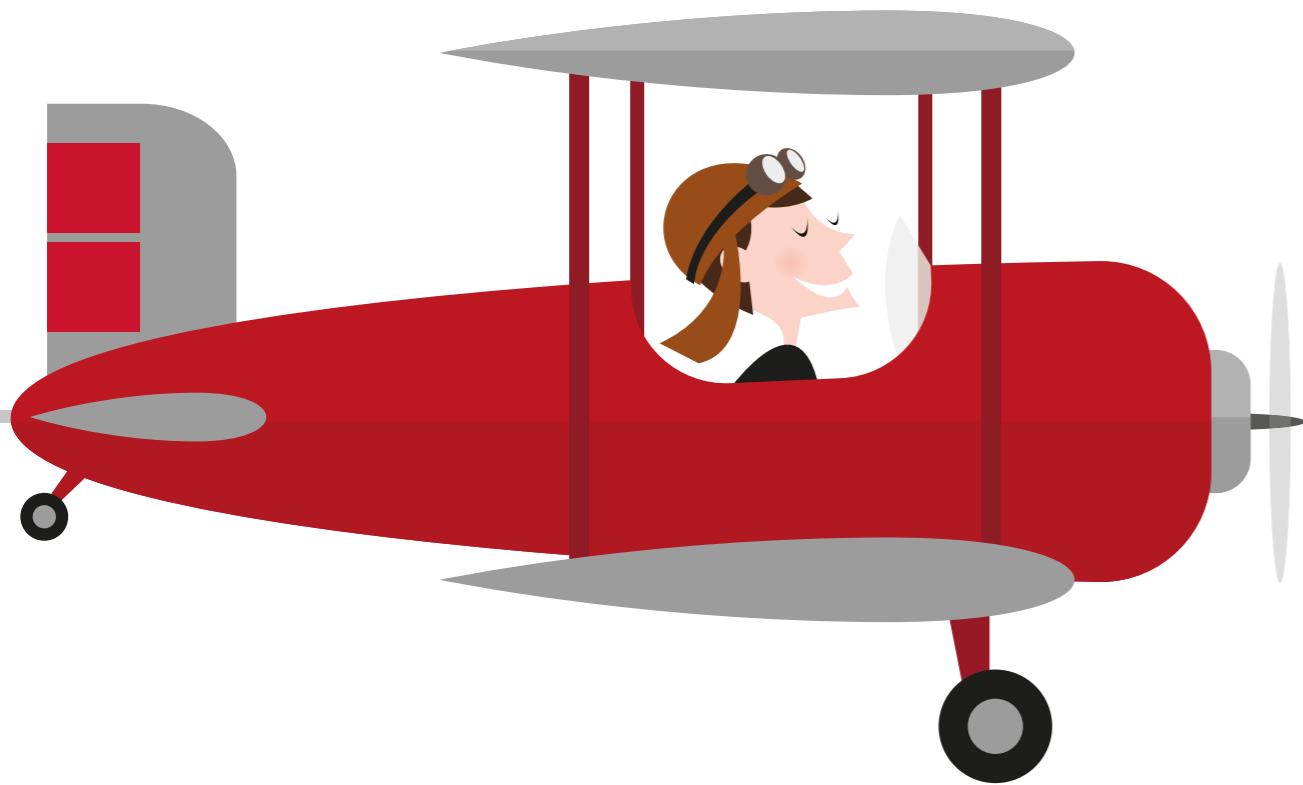
As shown in the diagram on page 8, there will be many visual elements of your Academy's identity. If they work together as a cohesive set, they will really help you to tell your community about what the school stands for.

All of your brand collateral, including logo, uniform, reception areas, vehicle liveries, banners and literature need to work together as an identifiable set, conveying consistent messages.

These are some of the things you need to bear in mind before the creative process begins. Your visual branding will need to be:

- Authentic – the visuals are completely rooted in the brand platform, and as a result are powerful assets in the telling of your Academy's story.
- Consistent – the same colour palettes, typefaces and design elements should be applied across everything in the same way.
- Sustainable – your visual identity must be able to stand the test of time.
- Flexible – your designs will have to work over objects of many different sizes, and made of many different materials. They will include everything from pens and mugs, through to fabric badges, signage and minibus livery. They will also need to work well in black and white.
- Maintained – going forward, you will need to think about who is going to act as your brand's guardian, so that none of its messaging is diluted with the introduction, for example, of colours, designs, typefaces and imagery that are off-brand.

"We have a consistent look and feel for everything. If you move away from that it will look unprofessional. Once we have created the visual identity it goes onto uniforms, signage, business cards etc, following our style guide, with consistent fonts and colours."
Academy sponsor

Creating your logo

As we've already seen, a logo is not the defining element of a brand. However, it is one of its most recognisable, so careful thought has to go into its creation.

A successful logo isn't just a pretty badge. It is rooted in the Academy's brand platform, and helps to tell its story in as uncomplicated a way as possible.

There are different types of logos, and it is only by referring to your brand platform that you will know which one is right for you.

A logotype or woodmark

This is when the name or initials of a brand is represented in a unique typographic format, for example ebay or Google.

Westminster Academy

Emblems or icons

Brands like Apple, BMW and BP are all recognisable from their emblems. Creating an emblem for your Academy can be a powerful way for your materials to become instantly recognisable.

David Young Community Academy

Combination marks

These logos combine an emblem with typography. These are most commonly used by Academies. In the commercial world, examples include Starbucks and Reebok.

St Mark's Church of England Academy

The Harefield Academy
The Harefield Academy hired a design company to devise its logo – a series of coloured dots that represent diversity, and also each of the school's house colours. The brand identity is used extensively, not only through the school's literature and website, but also on its reception desk and on items including memory sticks and signage.

How it might work

Marshfield Eco Academy draws on its brand platform to create possible identities for its brand.

Option 1: Acorn

Rationale
From small acorns, great oaks grow. This route uses a modern typeface with friendly imagery. Easy to use on a uniform and at small or large sizes.

No: Because:
It's not innovative, in fact it's quite clichéd. It doesn't convey school or learning, and isn't modern. Its focus seems junior.

Option 2: Shield

Rationale
This route conveys traditional school values with a sense of prestige.

No: Because:
This is too traditional. Marshfield Eco Academy is going to deliver education differently. It's just not distinctive enough.

Option 3: Organic letters

Rationale
The round and friendly typeface is modern. The interconnecting segments represent the coming together of minds – green shoots.

Yes: Because:
This logo feels modern, organic and inspirational. It represents the interconnectedness of ecosystems and society. It's simple enough to easily reproduce.

Colour, type, photography and illustration

Colour

Your choice of colour again sends out messages about your Academy's ethos and way of doing things. Colour has implicit meaning. Navy blue spells conservatism and tradition. Blacks and greys can be more modern and business-like. Turquoises and maroons can say, 'we're different'. Your brand platform tells you what you want to say to your community, and the colours you choose are a large part of expressing this.

Bear in mind: Colours can have different meanings in different cultures. White is a colour of mourning in many Asian countries. Purple is a colour of mourning in Ireland. Red means luck in China.

You also need to consider whether the colours you favour are going to be easy to reproduce.

"Our main colour is purple. It's used consistently across our communications and the way we present ourselves from documents to the kids' uniforms."
Academy communications officer

Type

The fonts you choose will also speak volumes about your values and your personality. They're another subliminal cue to what your Academy is all about.

Serifed fonts like Times New Roman convey tradition, while sans serif fonts can look more modern and forward-looking. The trick is to convey the right messages about your ethos. Your printed materials will also need to be accessible to people with impaired vision. The RNIB publishes Clear Print Guidelines on its website www.rnib.org.uk.

Tradition

Serif font

Modern

Sans serif font

Photography and illustration

You may also wish to adopt a style of photography and/or illustration that best conveys your Academy's values and ethos.

Maybe you will only show images of people in motion, or doing things, to reinforce your dynamic and energetic personality. Maybe you will only ever use colour photography in your branded materials.

It is worth taking time to consider this, as it will help you to brief photographers when they work in your school.

Finding the right words for your Academy

'Tone of voice' is the expression used in branding to describe the style of writing that accurately and consistently expresses your brand's personality.

To put it another way, the words you use give away a lot about your personality (whether you like it or not – or indeed, are aware of it or not).

So you need to think about the words you use, because they give your community a subliminal feel for the kind of organisation you are, or intend to become.

To master your tone of voice is to go a long way towards mastering the image you want to convey of your school.

For example:

If your Academy's brand platform describes a personality that is 'traditional, but fair and accessible' you will probably want to use language that is just formal enough to convey your image, yet readable enough to convey 'fair and accessible'.

So, your grammar will be traditional and correct – but you will make efforts not to be too dry, over wordy, or bogged down in jargon. In the commercial sector, the John Lewis style of language might be right for you.

If, on the other hand, your Academy's personality has been described as 'friendly, modern and informal' your style of language should express this. A style of writing from the commercial world that might suit this Academy is First Direct, the online bank.

Both of these personalities – and how they might express themselves in words – have equal validity. But they are not interchangeable. If your Academy is going to be very 'grammar school' in its values and look, the second style of writing would feel wrong and out of place.

You can get professional help with establishing your tone of voice, and/or with your writing, from a copywriter. Some copywriters work independently, while others work in branding or communications agencies.

Writing tips:
- Avoid jargon – unless your personality is described as 'bureaucratic', which is unlikely.
- Be brief – don't use 12 words when you could use two.
- Edit – go back over what you've written and cut back.
- Read your writing out loud – it's a great way of checking how it sounds to a reader.
- Simple words don't necessarily mean dumbing down… whereas long words can look pompous.
- Proofread thoroughly.

How it might work
Marshfield Eco Academy's personality is action orientated, accessible, modern and responsible. Its language, therefore, might include short purposeful sentences and doing words.

Personality = traditional, fair and accessible

Off brand ✘	On brand ✔	Why
Our overarching aim is to optimise life chances and outcomes for all children and young people, regardless of prior attainment or social situation, through focused attention on core curriculum subjects.	Our philosophy is one of success. By placing a particular emphasis on maths and English, we encourage all children to be the very best they can be.	Jargon can seem remote and bureaucratic. It can make the reader feel exhausted or stupid. Jargon can easily become natural to us when we use it all the time. Remember that when your words go out into the community, the majority of people you'll be speaking to will not have a background in education, and will not be familiar with terms that might seem natural to you.

The second version seems more human. It is still quite formal, but is much clearer and to the point. It also has the advantage of being shorter. |

Personality = friendly, modern and informal

Off brand ✘	On brand ✔	Why
Our philosophy is one of success. By placing a particular emphasis on maths and English, we encourage all children to be the very best they can be.	We're very clear that we want our students to succeed. Good passes in maths and English are expected from everyone.	This personality works in collaboration with its pupils. It has decided that 'students' is a better word than 'pupils' or 'children', because it encourages students to be more grown up and act more responsibly.

It has a 'tell it as you see it' attitude, and sees no reason to dress its language up.

Its use of contractions –'we're' instead of 'we are' is more conversational and informal. |

Deciding on a name

Well, here's a big responsibility! You've been through the rigours of consultation, your community is stirred up and waiting for more information… and you've got to put a name to the source of all the news stories and interest.

Through feasibility and consultation, your proposed Academy was just known by the local authority name and a number. Now you've got to choose the real thing. There are a number of options, and many factors to consider. By constantly referring to your brand platform, you will find the one that is right for your Academy and its vision, values, key differentiators and personality.

Types of name

Predecessor school
If you are replacing an underperforming school, you will want to create a name that's very different to what went before. If, however, your Academy is going to be the natural progression for a highly successful school, then you will probably want to retain the name of that school – and all the associations it has for your community – in some form.

Examples: (to signal change) Thamesmead Community College was renamed as The Business Academy Bexley; (to retain the equity of the successful school) Thomas Deacon School became Thomas Deacon Academy.

People
Many Academies are named after people. The upside of this kind of name is that you're unlikely to find another school with the same name. The downside potentially could be if a skeleton stalks out of your chosen person's cupboard. If you choose this kind of name, it's a good idea to make sure the identity of the person and their relevance to your school is known by all staff and students.

Examples: The Samworth Enterprise Academy (named after Academy sponsor David Samworth) and David Young Community Academy (named after the former Bishop of Rippon, who died in 2008).

> "There was a suggestion that the school should be named after Nelson Mandela. As great as he is, taking on board such a well-known name says so much and sets high expectations." Academy principal

Places
Even more Academies are named after the town, area or community they serve. These names can be authoritative and neutral – but their impact has the potential to become diluted if more new schools are built in the area.

Examples: Westminster Academy, The Harefield Academy, The Folkestone Academy, North Liverpool Academy.

> "Naming can be a very emotive process, so handle it carefully and engage people in the process." Project manager

Abstract or made-up names
Made-up names are less common for schools – but they have the advantage of being distinctive and memorable, and signalling real change. If you decide on a name like this, be careful to follow the checklist set out on the right.

Example: Q3 Academy (from the Latin quaerere – to seek after or search for. The '3' comes from, 'To seek for that which is true, To seek for that which is good, To seek for that which is right').

> "I wouldn't suggest you take on the name of the predecessor school. I think it's important to signify a change and something new." Academy sponsor

Metaphors
You could choose a name that embodies the values and aspirations you have for your Academy.

Examples: The Gateway Academy, Spires Academy.

Naming checklist:
- Is the name you want to use easy to say and to spell?
- Does it stand for something meaningful?
- Ask for the DCSF's list of Academies and upcoming Academies to check that the name you want isn't already being used.
- Check that the name doesn't mean anything different in the languages used by your community.
- Could the initials of the school be an abbreviation of something you'd rather not be associated with, or called?
- Is an appropriate website address (domain name) available?
- Does your preferred name sound similar to another school in the area – or even to a well-known brand or company?

> Commercial brands usually seek to protect their name and brand identity through copyright.
>
> It's unusual for a school in the public sector to seek to do this, but if you think this is going to be an issue, you should contact the Government's Intellectual Property Office www.ipo.gov.uk

Uniforms and houses

One of your most important brand assets will be your Academy's uniform. It is what will be seen most in the community, and it will form the basis of a lot of early judgement of your school.

You can use the brand platform to help you choose what styles and colours will be right for your Academy and your community.

Blazers, suits and ties work brilliantly for some Academies, but aren't necessarily right for others.

Case study
In line with the school's enterprise speciality, Q3 Academy in Sandwell adopted business-like uniforms of grey pinstripe suits with a tie for boys and a silk cravat/scarf for girls.

The school's CEO, Caroline Badyal says: "We have built a very strong brand that is recognised, is exciting and is respected. Our uniform is extremely smart and has created a lot of buzz locally."

Case study
The Harefield Academy's uniform is a brown pinstripe blazer with maroon piping. Boys wear white shirts and a tie, while girls wear pink shirts. Because the Academy's specialisation is sport, there are also maroon sports kits. Sixth formers wear smart clothes with a jacket.

BHS is one of the school's corporate partners, and the cost of the uniform is underwritten – so that each jacket only costs £18. Students from the school were involved in the uniform's design, and were taken to see the garments being designed and made up.

Case study
Students at the Marlowe Academy wear polo shirts and fleeces – a uniform that has been designed for comfort without being too formal or scruffy. Principal Ian Johnson says: "It's important for me that pupils and their parents feel comfortable and at home here."

PHOTO REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES

PHOTO REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES

Academy houses
You may decide to establish a house system in your Academy. Again, to create a strong brand, these houses should have relevance and meaning to the core ethos of your school.

Examples:
The Harefield Academy, whose specialism is sport, named its houses after sportsmen and women.

Northampton Academy has named its houses after prominent Northamptonshire figures including footballers and artists.

Westminster Academy, with its striking colourful building and specialism in International Business and Enterprise, has colours for house names.

Straplines and mottos

A strapline is a short phrase which describes a core belief, code, behaviour or vision of your Academy.

A motto tends to work more as a maxim about an organisation's goals or behaviours. Mottos have a more 'upright' feel to them than the more relaxed and descriptive strapline. They're often written in Latin, to convey gravitas.

A strapline or a motto can act as a constant reminder of what your Academy stands for and expects.

Most Academies have a strapline, and use it on much of their branded material (literature, signage, vehicle livery, etc). Some have a motto. Some have both.

Again, whether you choose a strapline or a motto, it will be most effective if you use it to convey the personality, values and ethos of your Academy. If you use a Latin motto, make sure that all staff and students can say it, and know what it means.

Examples:
The Petchey Academy has both a strapline and a motto, which is used on its school badge.

Motto: Excelsior (ever upward)

Strapline: Traditional values in a modern world

These work together to give a very clear indication of what the school stands for, and how it operates. Even if you weren't familiar with The Petchey Academy, it would not surprise you to discover that its uniform is a grammar school-style blazer and tie, and that the most prominent images on its website feature students placing poppies in their lapels.

Capital City Academy has the following strapline:

Exceptional opportunities for success

This sounds business-like, aspirational and modern. It is a good summation of what the Academy stands for, but also conveys the way in which it operates.

Examples from Academies:

Straplines

Exceptional opportunities for success
Capital City Academy

Traditional values in a modern world
The Petchy Academy

Achievement through active learning
The Harefield Academy

Learners inspiring learning
John Cabot Academy

Building your career and community
David Young Community Academy

Working together towards success
Oasis Academy Immingham

Examples from outside state education:

Straplines	Mottos
Every little helps Tesco	**In God we trust** USA
Where do you want to go today? Microsoft	**Floreat etona (May Eton flourish)** Eton College
Be humankind Oxfam	**Arte et labore (By skill and hard work)** Blackburn Rovers

How it might work

Marshfield Eco Academy's Strapline is:

We all make a difference.

This comes from the Academy's commitment to responsibility, and its vision that 'every child will leave school fully qualified, motivated and personally equipped to contribute to the world'.

MEA
Marshford Eco Academy
We all make a difference

Making it happen

So, now you've read the theory behind building a brand. This next section concentrates on how to make it happen – how to make your ideas and deeply held beliefs and ambitions come together in one unique, cohesive, easily identifiable identity.

"It's not about having a definitive brand from day one. It's more important to build something with longevity that everyone will buy into."

Involving stakeholders

Academies are at the heart of their communities. They are also, at least initially, sometimes the subject of misunderstanding .

One of the main jobs of Academy project teams is to win over the community they serve, and to generate pride and ownership of the brand in staff and students. It makes sense, therefore, to seek to involve members of the community, students and staff in building the Academy's brand.

This may seem daunting. However, it doesn't have to mean revisiting consultation. What it *can* mean is involving the children from predecessor schools, representatives of your feeder primary schools, the local authority, local youth groups, local faith groups, etc in different aspects of the process. We take it as a given that the principal, Academy sponsors and project managers will be involved in building the brand.

The children from the predecessor school are most affected by uniform and the name of the school – and there have been several successful examples of Academies involving children in designing their new kit.

"We hire design/brand consultants to create the visual identity for each of our schools. School names and uniforms are often created in consultation with students. You'd be surprised, children tend to be quite conservative and conformist. They know what a school uniform looks like, and they tend to stick to traditional images." Multiple Academy sponsor

"We hold workshops with the pupils prior to the new Academy opening to engage them in the branding process. We teach them what a brand is and how it's important, as well as finding out what they want from their school. If there are two predecessor schools, we'll involve both sets of pupils together.

"We start by showing pupils sections of different logos to see if they can identify them. Then we show them a range of logos and ask them what words they associate with them, and to think about whether they'd be happy with the responses if they were the manager of that company. We continue by asking them what words they would like to be associated with their school. The exercise helps them to understand that branding isn't just about logos, but what they stand for." Multiple Academy sponsor

Involving students in these decisions is important. It helps to make sure that every facet of your brand is anchored in what your community needs and supports.

How to involve stakeholders
There are many different ways to canvas opinion. You, or your design agency, could appoint an external research agency to hold focus groups. These can be helpful, as the views of specific sectors of the community can be sought all in a one-hour session.

You could also set up a drop-in surgery. Or you could set up an online research tool, where people can log in and make their views known. You could conduct telephone interviews or face-to-face interviews… or use a mixture of methods.

Time management
Of course, the more people who are involved, the more potential there is for decisions to take longer to reach. The ideal is to reach a balance where you are listening to the views of key groups (*properly* listening), and incorporating their ideas into your thinking. But, it may help you to keep on schedule if you restrict final decision making to one or two people.

The key thing is, your Academy's brand will be more authentic, and more rooted in the community it serves, if the community has had an opportunity to have their say.

Make sure you know what else is out there

Get a firm grasp of how your neighbouring schools are branded, what they're called, and what uniforms they're wearing. You will probably not want your students to be confused with children from other schools.

Check online and in the local yellow pages to see if the name you want is already being used by another organisation or business.

Get the DCSF's list of existing and up-coming Academies to see if the name you want to use is already in use.

Appointing an agency
Pull all your research together, create a first draft of your brand platform, and then set about hiring an agency.

To do this, you will need to:
• Source a shortlist of relevant design agencies. The DCSF may be able to guide you on agencies that have already worked with Academies.
• Write a brief, setting out exactly what you want an agency to do, to what budget and what timescales. A sample brief follows.
• Contact about three of your shortlisted suppliers, and let them know that you'd like to invite them to pitch for your work. This means that the separate agencies are being invited to compete for your work, and will come to introduce themselves to you, and give you a presentation on what they know about the Academy, and where they think your identity could go.

• Some pitches are paid, most aren't. Unless you state otherwise, the agency will assume you are not paying for their time as they prepare for the pitch. However, if you ask for a lot of work up front to help you make your decision, it would not be unreasonable for the agencies involved to ask for their expenses to be covered.

Agencies usually pitch on the same day, or over a couple of days. It's not good practice to let agencies know who they're competing against.

Some organisations don't meet the agencies who are pitching for their work. Usually this is the case when an approved roster is already in place. However, it's a very good idea to meet the people you could be working on such an important project with. You have to be able to get on with them and the way they work.

After each agency has pitched, you choose the one that is best for you in terms of their experience, your community, your budget and timelines, and how well you think you'll be able to work together. Always give considered feedback to the agencies who haven't been successful – it's only polite after they've committed time, energy and money to preparing a pitch.

Preparing a brief
Set out, as briefly as possible, some of the background, aims and ambitions of the Academy. State that you want to develop a brand identity, and what items it will need to appear across – for example, literature, stationery, badges, livery, signage, website.

If you have developed your brand platform, include it, as it will help the agencies to get to the heart of your brand much more quickly. It may also help to include the main description of Academies from the inroductory booklet to this pack, to help explain to the agencies what Academies are, and how they are different to maintained schools. It may also be helpful to include any relevant newspaper clippings (maybe to show some of the perceptions you want to overcome).

Example project brief
Project title: Brand identity for a new Academy

Project manager and contact details: Add here

Background: (add name) Academy will be opened in September in the buildings of the former (add name) school. In a year's time, it will move into purpose-built facilities locally.

Challenge: We need to signal a distinct change in ethos from the old school with our new identity. In addition, we want to stand out from the other schools and sixth form colleges in our area.

Target audiences:
• Students and parents
• Staff
• Governors
• The wider community

What we would like you to prepare for the pitch:
• Ideas for our identity, including colour palette, logo and typefaces.
• Examples of how you would apply these to a number of different media, including a prospectus cover, stationery, signage, uniform, website, bags, mugs, PowerPoint presentations, etc.
• An overview of how you would gain the insight to carry this project forward.
• An overview of how you would resource this project.
• Facilitation of workshops with students.
• Facilitation of focus groups.

Budget: Add here

Timing/deadlines: Add here

Ideally, this brief should not go beyond two pages of A4. It is normal for agencies to contact you for further information and/or clarification. You will be able to judge whether you consider the amount of contact you have with an agency to be sufficient or over the top.

Working with an agency

Once you have appointed an agency, the approach should be collaborative. The agency would not be doing its job properly if it did not occasionally challenge or question your original brief.

What the agency will then do is draw up a much more specific project plan, outlining deliverables, costs and timings. Deliverables should include brand guidelines, a comprehensive set of rules about how you or another supplier should use the designs they create. You should have a point of contact with the agency that you can call at any time.

Normally, an agency will show you two to three initial design concepts, and after seeking your views and opinions, will develop one of them to be the finished product.

You may want to 'test' these designs they propose in community focus groups – or you may decide that you just know what feels right.

You need to be aware of all of the costs that are involved in working with an agency. Development of a brand identity will probably only constitute phase one of your involvement with the agency. You may then commission separate pieces of work to generate the design and artwork for each of the elements you will need to brand different items. The agency should explain all this to you.

The agency may also be able to facilitate community, student and staff engagement for you, to help build your brand. If you would like them to do this, say so in your project brief.

Case study
The Harefield Academy worked with a branding and design agency which facilitated consultation with students.

In an initial exercise, the agency showed picture boards of animals and asked the students which they thought best represented the predecessor school. They chose a slug, a donkey and a mongrel dog.

When asked which animals should represent their new school, they chose a panther, a dolphin and a thoroughbred race horse.

Launch the brand
Launching your Academy's brand represents a huge opportunity to communicate the story of your school. It's not just another box on the project list to be ticked off, it's something that you can unveil to your community to create real buzz and excitement about the opening.

You could send out press releases revealing details of the new identity (see the *Working with the media* guide for more detail).

You could celebrate with a community event (see the *Getting your community on board* guide).

And, further down the line when your staff are in place, you could weave sessions about the school's brand and ethos into training sessions and materials.

Live the brand
Every time you make contact with an organisation, you form an impression of it. If you get great customer service, you think highly of the shop you got it in. The opposite is also true.

'Brand' has been described as a set of behaviours. All the nice design and language in the world will count for nothing if your behaviour and that of your school's staff is not also deeply rooted in the Academy's ethos, vision and values.

"Our teaching and support staff are known in and around the community. They must therefore always be on best behaviour when they're out and about. It's about living the image 24/7." Academy principal

More than anything, it is the behaviour of your students and staff that will impact on your reputation, and build perceptions of your brand.

A truly successful brand system is also a belief system. It will allow you to judge what activities and actions are right for the school as time goes on.

Managing your Academy's brand
For a brand to be successful and undiluted, it needs to be applied consistently and policed for rogue pieces of typography or design.

The artwork supplied by your agency must be applied consistently, according to the rules. If they have designed a logo that needs space around it, you need to be vigilant that no-one on staff is using it as a background, or is tilting it, or using it with different colours.

Though well intentioned, these actions rob your brand identity of strength and professionalism.

Managing the consistency of application of the brand should become everyone's responsibility, and anyone using parts of it should be well acquainted with the brand guidelines.

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