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Academies, Trusts and Higher Education: prospectus

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department for
children, schools and families

Department for
**Innovation,
Universities &
Skills**

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1. Foreword

Success in education lies at the heart of the Government's agenda for economic strength, and social justice. The Government is committed to providing excellent opportunities for all young people in schools, colleges and universities, allowing them to develop the skills to take the country forward and fulfil their potential.

The higher education sector has been challenged to widen participation, particularly for young people from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. Programmes like Aimhigher have made a real difference using visits to campuses, undergraduate mentoring, summer schools and master classes to create aspirations of higher education. Gifted and Talented programmes are targeting young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. University-led Compact Schemes build relationships with local schools and colleges, creating a better understanding of HE opportunities and encouraging a wider range of applicants.

Growth in access to higher education has taken great steps forward, but universities need to do more. Of course, they cannot offer places to students who do not apply, and even the most able students need to be sufficiently well-prepared to study and succeed. But a truly world-class higher education system must nurture the skills of all young people, from every background.

Universities need to engage directly with schools to ensure that their potential students, whatever their backgrounds, are properly equipped to make the most of higher education. Direct involvement and sustained involvement with individual schools will help to break down some of the misconceptions about the willingness of universities to recruit from more disadvantaged communities. In his Mansion House speech of June 2007, the Prime Minister said he would like every secondary school to have a higher education partner. There are many ways for universities to get involved and a large number of higher education institutions already have strong partnership arrangements with local schools. This prospectus sets out how universities could create deep, sustained links with particular schools.

Higher education institutions that wish to sponsor an academy or support a trust school are uniquely placed to shape its vision and strategy. In July we announced that high performing educational institutions such as universities would no longer need to provide financial sponsorship in order to become involved with academies. We want universities to apply their professional expertise in matters of teaching, learning, curriculum enrichment and organisation to enable their partner school to shape their ethos and thrive. This is an opportunity to develop, nurture and influence the undergraduates of tomorrow.

Higher education institutions are already making a significant contribution to the academies and trust schools programmes. Over 20 universities are involved in sponsoring academies and 13 have engaged with school trusts, with many others in exploratory discussions about future partnerships.

The academies programme and the trust schools model are part of a new spirit of co-operation between the secondary and higher education sectors. This prospectus sets out how your institution can help build educational excellence at all levels.

John Denham, Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills

Ed Balls, Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families

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2. Why should the higher education sector get involved?

If we are to achieve a world-class higher education system, we need to draw upon the most talented young people from all backgrounds. The Government is committed to widening participation so that the benefits of higher education can spread to talented young people from all backgrounds.

The higher education sector has responded to the challenge and real progress has been made towards embedding widening participation into the core mission of higher education. The Aimhigher programme has enabled higher education institutions to work closely with a wide range of education institutions and services for young people in order to raise attainment and aspirations towards higher education.

However, considerable challenges remain in increasing higher education participation for students from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. For universities, direct engagement with secondary education is the next step to widening participation. The Government would like every secondary school to have a higher education partnership, in recognition of the importance of universities' crucial leadership role. For universities, close and sustained co-operation with individual schools will build on existing partnerships, offers a chance to prepare students from particular communities for higher education and to inspire them to apply.

The higher education sector can offer a great deal to schools of all types. As well as sharing the strength of their reputation, in sponsoring an academy or supporting a trust school a university can share and develop its expertise in a number of key areas, which could include:

- creation of a strong **educational vision** for the school;
- contribution to robust **governance and leadership**;
- ongoing **professional development for staff** to improve teaching and learning and encourage recruitment;
- ongoing **support and mentoring for students**, including 'learning to learn' and specialist support for Gifted and Talented students;
- development of **curriculum specialism(s)**;
- **raising student aspirations** to post-16 study and higher education, dispelling myths about HE and dismantling perceived barriers to higher education participation;
- facilitating visits by **student ambassadors** to raise aspirations and act as role models;
- **developing knowledge and understanding of tomorrow's HE student** – how and what they learn in school, what their expectations

of higher education might be and how HE should respond;

- access to **university resources and facilities**, for example shared use of sports facilities, educational software, libraries.

Many academies replace weak or failing schools serving communities for whom education is crucial to social mobility. By becoming involved as a sponsor, a university has the opportunity to reach directly into such communities and ensure that young people are not only prepared for study in higher education, but are inspired to believe that their schooling is only the beginning of a lifetime of learning. More than 20 universities have already engaged with the academies programme.

In contrast, trust schools are not necessarily weak schools – most are typically performing well above the level which would be considered for an

academy project, but are ready to undertake an expansion or shift of direction. Many seek to formalise their existing positive relationships with external partners as a lasting legacy for their schools or draw from the experience and expertise of other schools and institutions. Universities are therefore ideally placed to build upon this firm basis and further enhance their profile within the local community. More than 25 universities have already engaged with the trust schools programme, 13 are confirmed partners working with schools.

In short, both academies and trust schools provide universities with opportunities to do something significant, important, new and worthwhile in education, which benefits all those directly involved, contributing to the healthy development of our whole society.

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Office for Fair Access

When the Government introduced the new fees regime, there were anxieties that it would put off some well-qualified potential students who would otherwise have applied. This risk has in OFFA's view been largely overcome thanks to the diverse, but overall very effective, access support arrangements which government and universities have introduced, including cash bursaries, scholarships and subject specific support. Many of these are enshrined in the access agreements now registered with OFFA.

In OFFA's view, support for existing students is at about the right level. Survey evidence confirms that few students qualified and keen to enter university are in fact deterred by financial considerations. Both universities and the Government should regard this as a successful response to the new fee arrangements.

But there is much more to do if we are to broaden intakes beyond those young people who are both qualified and keen. The next challenge is to reach out earlier, to **wholly new** groups of potential students – younger children from communities and families with no tradition of higher education. Even talented children, if they lack clear aspirations, may not achieve good enough results to stay on at school; and for too many, higher education simply never features as an option.

The challenge now is for universities, alongside many other partners, to reach out much further into schools and communities with low levels of participation in tertiary education, and to help build up aspirations from the bottom. It is not enough to reach out, as good universities have always done, to sixth formers in high-performing schools; for these young people, HE is almost an automatic assumption. Universities will need in future to engage with much younger cohorts: children in early secondary and even in the primary phase. It is at these ages that low expectations are all too easily established and reinforced.

The greatest benefit will come to universities from radical engagement in transforming schools where results and aspirations are lowest. There are some excellent examples of this already from a number of universities. I would like to see the effort spread more widely. The evidence suggests it pays dividends for universities as a whole – even if not every pound reverts in the short term to the particular higher education institution which invested it.

I believe the time has come for every university to consider directing a larger proportion of its outreach funding to hands-on engagement with schools targeting major improvements in their educational offer, including academies and trust schools. OFFA will look warmly on universities which decide to invest more of their access and outreach funding in this way.

Unless universities engage to change the aspirations of the 13 year olds in some of our run-down estates, and help to transform the schools they attend, we will not achieve the further extension of participation which I believe is in the interests of higher education and the country as a whole.

Sir Martin Harris, Director of Fair Access

3. What are academies?

Academies are all-ability state schools with a mission to transform education. They are set up where the local status quo in secondary education is simply not good enough and where there is a demand for new high quality school places. They are established and managed by independent sponsors and funded by the Government at a level comparable to other local schools. They are not maintained by the local authority, but they are set up with its consent and collaborate closely with it and other schools in the area.

Some academies are brand new schools in areas needing extra school places. Others replace weak or under-performing schools serving disadvantaged communities. As a broad rule of thumb, the Government is prepared to consider as a potential academy project any secondary school where in 2007 fewer than 30% of pupils gained five or more good GCSEs including English and maths.

Strong, ambitious leadership, effective management, high aspirations for all pupils and good teaching are essential ingredients in the success of schools. Academies are also stimulating a culture shift in ethos and expectations. Where academies replace highly challenging schools it will inevitably take time to transform standards, but almost all academies are demonstrating year on year improvement substantially above the

national average. The National Audit Office's evaluation of academies, published in February 2007, concluded that "performance is improving faster in academies than in other types of school, including those in similar circumstances". The key achievements of academies to date are set out later in this document.

As of September 2007 there are 83 academies open in 49 local authorities, with a further 50 projected to open in September 2008. The sponsors include educational foundations, universities, philanthropists, businesses, private school trusts and the faith communities, all with the backing of local authorities. The Government is committed to establishing 400 academies as part of the creation of a world class education system and has committed sufficient resources to ensure that it will happen.

Until recently the lead sponsor of an academy had been required to provide sponsorship of £2 million. On 10 July the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families announced that sponsors which are existing high-performing education institutions – whether universities, colleges or schools – would in future be exempt from this requirement. We want higher education institutions to sponsor academies for their educational expertise and commitment to social mobility.

Sponsoring an Academy, particularly where the young people attending the school are largely from disadvantaged backgrounds with no family experience of higher education, could be a valuable development of a university's widening participation strategy.

Each academy is unique. Because of the programme's focus on fitting each academy to its community and circumstances, their success has been sustained as the programme has expanded and there is every reason to believe that this will continue to be the case.

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4. What are trust schools?

Trust schools are state-funded foundation schools supported by a charitable trust. The purpose of the trust is to use partnership working as a vehicle to drive up standards through long-term, formal relationships between the partner organisations. They allow innovative ways of addressing persistent school-based challenges to be developed through the expertise of a range of partners, which can include universities, national and local businesses, as well as third sector and public sector organisations. The trust offers the partner organisations the opportunity to shape the direction of education in their area and create a lasting legacy to secure the school's future.

A trust is made up of one or more schools and partners working together for the benefit of the school(s). Any school can become a trust school, regardless of whether it is a primary, secondary or special school. There is no set model for a trust: the first examples, which opened in September 2007, range from a single secondary school with one partner, to a federation of secondary schools focusing on delivery of the 14-19 agenda, or a secondary school with its feeder primary schools and their local community resources, focusing on health issues, transition or the Every Child Matters agenda.

The first trust schools came into being in September 2007. There are currently 30 trusts in 10 local authorities, 23 of which are working in 6 collaborative trusts. Nearly 200 schools are actively pursuing trust status. The partner organisations include universities, further education colleges and local employers reflect the Government's ambition that every school should be linked to a higher or further education institution and a business.

Universities are popular choices of partner when schools consider establishing trusts. Increasing numbers of schools are discussing the benefits of trust membership with vice chancellors or heads of department and other university staff. A large number of higher education institutions already have strong partnership arrangements with local schools and in many cases trust membership is an extension of an existing, established and successful arrangement. Many higher education institutions have links with schools outside their immediate area created by Initial Teacher Training placements, widening participation and outreach activities or other, subject-based initiatives. These extensive contacts mean that higher education institutions can broaden the horizons of their partner schools and share good practice more widely.

5. What are the options for getting involved?

There are three main ways for higher education institutions to develop a more direct involvement in secondary education beyond the links many universities already have with schools in their area:

- To become the **lead sponsor** of a new academy.
- To become a **co-sponsor** of a new academy, providing significant support through transfer of educational expertise, but looking to other sponsors to lead on other aspects of the school's development.
- To **support** a trust school.

These options are explored in the following sections, together with case-study illustrations.

(a) Sponsoring an academy

This is a major opportunity for higher education institutions to engage with an academy as part of their contribution to widening participation.

As the lead sponsor, a higher education institution would take on the full responsibility for setting up the new academy. The state is the hidden partner, guaranteeing to meet initial capital costs and subsequent running costs. But the key decisions about the strategic direction of the new school will lie with the sponsor. In return for this degree of control, the sponsor puts in the hard graft – taking a leadership role on the governing body, setting goals and standards, determining academic, curriculum and admissions strategy, hiring and managing top staff, in short running the new academy. Where beneficial, the Government will help education lead sponsors to find potential co-sponsors.

Sponsoring an academy – University of the West of England and City Academy, Bristol

Of the twelve universities in the region, the University of the West of England (UWE) is the largest recruiter of young, full-time first degree entrants from state schools and colleges, and from lower social classes and low participation neighbourhoods. Minority ethnic students are also very well represented.

In 2001 the predecessor school of the City Academy in the Lawrence Hill area of Bristol was under-performing. UWE was easily persuaded that it would be in its own as well as the wider community's interest to sponsor an academy to replace it. As co-sponsor, local businessman John Laycock put up a significant cash endowment.

The university's engagement was and remains substantial. From the outset, professional support for curriculum development was provided through the Faculty of Education. The Vice-Chancellor became president of the academy's board, along with two senior colleagues as trustees – including the Director of Finance who was active in setting up governance and financial controls, and subsequently became the Vice-Chair. The university provided key administrative support, including seconding an estate manager during the building phase.

From the opening of the academy in 2003 the balance of the university's engagement shifted from logistics to curricular design, pedagogy and student support. It quickly became involved in mentoring – not just for the pupils but also for their parents, bringing the family onto the campus to make higher education feel like an achievable and normal goal.

A wide range of patterns of involvement emerged. As well as the drip-feed of individual contacts, the university introduced "Flood the Academy" days when 50 undergraduates – Student Ambassadors – join in lessons and engage with every activity. The university aims to be highly visible throughout the school, and participates in or leads a wide range of activities, both on-going and planning, including:

- Literacy support for Year 7
- "Heading Higher" passports (building blocks to higher education)
- Lunchtime, breakfast and homework and Saturday morning clubs
- Easter revision classes for Year 12
- Personal finance for Year 13 – budgeting for student life
- University pre-entry classes and assistance with UCAS personal statements
- Student mentoring
- Awards for good attendance and subject achievement
- Staff CPD – fees remitted for academy staff
- Joint appointments of staff working for both institutions
- Developing a Foundation degree, for launch in 2008

The university derives both direct and indirect gains from its involvement. In terms of better understanding of the social fabric of modern Britain, all students and staff (and not just those of the education faculty) benefit from hands-on exposure to this local school, two-thirds of whose intake is from ethnic minorities. Students and staff can see for themselves how the academy is changing lives; by their own involvement they contribute to this by “normalising” higher education in the minds of pupils.

More broadly the university sees advantages in being able, through first-hand knowledge of secondary education, to prepare all students for university study. This allows widening participation on a more secure basis, reducing the risks for all parties. Finally it enables the university to engage with its local communities, and to contribute to community regeneration.

The pitfall which UWE has successfully avoided is of causing division by exclusivity. The university has already supported a newly-opened second academy (Bristol Brunel), and has made clear that it is willing to partner with other schools, whether as academies, trust schools or otherwise. In general the university prefers the term “partnership”, as reflecting better the two-way nature of the relationship.

From the academy’s viewpoint, the unique feature of the university’s involvement is its impact on raising aspirations. In each of the last three years, over half of pupils achieved five good GCSEs, compared to 22% at the predecessor school in 2002; attaining this threshold is now the norm rather than the exception. The aspiration is sustained right through to age 18: whereas in 2002 only seven sixth-formers went on to university, in 2007 the figure was 39, and for 2008 a target of 50 or more looks attainable.

(b) Co-sponsoring an academy

Higher education institutions may feel that they want to support an academy rather than lead its development. Many have therefore chosen to become a **co-sponsor** of a new academy. This allows them to provide significant support through the transfer of educational expertise, but look to other sponsors to lead on other aspects of the school’s development and leaving them able to take part in other community activity.

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Co-sponsoring an academy – University of Nottingham Samworth Academy

In 2005 the local authority invited the University of Nottingham to sponsor the transformation of William Sharp School, an 11-16 comprehensive in Bilborough, into one of three proposed new academies in Nottingham. This was an integrated part of the city's Building Schools for the Future programme, which envisaged the new academies contributing towards a major effort to drive up standards of achievement in Nottingham, traditionally low on most performance tables.

Considerable debate ensued before the university agreed to take the plunge. The School of Education, which works in partnership with a large group of local schools, was sensitive to suggestions that the university might 'favour' William Sharp over others. On the other hand, there was no shortage of innovative ideas as to how best to engage with the school and transform standards. The proposed curricular specialism (Health and Science) tied in extraordinarily well with the interests of the Medical Faculty in promoting health in an area of the city characterised by chronic illness, unemployment and teenage pregnancy. As sponsors, the university would be ideally positioned to generate research-based evidence that could fuel city-wide – perhaps nationwide – improvements.

Di Birch, Pro-Vice-Chancellor with special responsibility for the project, decided to link with a co-sponsor to provide the necessary cash contribution. The university's partnership with local businessman David Samworth, who is also sponsoring two other academies, turned out to be a most satisfying partnership of equals.

The university made a short film about the challenges faced by the existing school. The excellent response proved how keen the staff and students were, not just to open up the university's own facilities but to make a personal commitment to meeting the community's needs. The project has already drawn on the special expertise of colleagues in Education, Medicine and Science-related disciplines, and also on the wider resource of volunteers from amongst staff and students, building on the university's fine tradition of volunteering.

With two years to go before the academy opens, the school and university have already engaged in successful partnership projects. Four notable examples:

- Dance: the university brought in a group of dancers to work with year 7 pupils who then put on a live show for parents. A film about this activity, contrasting the existing facilities with those of an academy, helped to explain the sponsors' intentions to parents, and every pupil in the school received a copy.
- Nursing: the School of Nursing put together an induction day for new entrants to the school. Students and pupils collaborated in making a film about the day which amply illustrates what the two institutions can offer one another.
- Literacy and IT: each year 7 pupil will write, illustrate and produce a "Real e-book", a project possible only through working with the university.
- A cohort of 10 graduate teacher trainees – an exceptional number – is now working at the school, offering the head a valuable extra resource.

The university is ambitious for its new academy, and optimistic about its future. The existing school has done well this year, with a positive Ofsted report and better GCSE outcomes. This provides the base for even greater efforts when the academy opens, to overcome the disengagement of young

people from education. The sponsors see a strong case for the academy to be all-age rather than just 11-19, to build in quality right from the start of a child's education. The local authority will consult on this, and if successful there would be a second phase of new building.

In directly sponsoring a single school right on its doorstep, yet maintaining a close partnership with a much wider number of schools across a broader area, the university believes it has found the right balance. The intensity of this one-to-one relationship gives the university opportunities for hands-on engagement with the immediate community – and these benefits feed straight back into better delivery of the university's core mission for its whole catchment area, and indeed nationally

Link to film: http://www.cgvision.co.uk/ustream/william_sharp_video.html

Co-sponsoring an academy – University of Liverpool and North Liverpool Academy

The University of Liverpool is the only English Russell Group institution to exceed its benchmarks in the proportion of students from state schools and from low participation neighbourhoods. It has been closely and substantially involved in outreach work for some years, and is the lead institution in the Merseyside sub-region for Aimhigher. Its outreach activities target under-represented groups in the Greater Merseyside area, where participation in higher education is low.

Sponsoring the new North Liverpool Academy was a natural fit with this widening participation agenda, and also with the aims of the newly opened Management School. The university was keen to help the academy develop a strongly entrepreneurial culture, backed by innovative teaching, learning and use of technologies. During the set-up period the university provided logistical support and was active in establishing the governance structures and appointing the headteacher. The challenge was to go further, and connect an agenda of widening participation with strongly positive attitudes towards employment, business and enterprise, to address a long history linking school failure with under-employment.

Early benefits came from a strong engagement with the university's new Advanced Internet Methods and Emergent Systems (AIMES) centre. AIMES is a pioneer in the transfer of e-science to e-business, and sees the academy as a good testing ground for educational applications of these technologies, and transference of enterprise skills. AIMES helped bring about some key developments:

- Planning and implementing a major £240,000 project to give pupils access to computers at home, and linking the entire local community to the internet, through a computer radio "cloud" accessed via thin client servers. AIMES helped the academy to prepare the specification, write the bid proposal, and shape the implementation of this cutting edge application, which benefits the academy and the whole neighbourhood.
- Building a new community centre funded by the Government Office for the North West, which succeeded through the university's assistance in transferring bidding skills to academy staff.
- Developing a vocational training centre with facilities for motor vehicle and wet trades to open in eighteen months' time.
- Connecting the academy to SuperJanet, the academic network.

- Developing systems for logging and recording within Diplomas each credit and other unit of achievement across the curriculum. The system is working so well in tracking pupils' progress that it will now be extended to GCSE.

The academy staff consider the university's contribution of time and effort to be quite remarkable. More than any other factor, this link has raised pupils' expectations of what is attainable. In the context of Liverpool and the north-west, the university's involvement has broken down the isolation of local communities, and opened doors to a wider world.

There is a personal connection at the back of this encouraging partnership. The Director of AIMEs, Professor Dennis Kehoe, was formerly head boy at one of the two predecessor schools in Anfield. Emulating his own teachers who helped him get to Imperial College, he has become a champion and role model for young people from the new academy, encouraging them to believe in themselves. He now sees in the academy sixth formers a group of self-confident young people, for whom higher education is a realistic option.

(c) Supporting a trust school

In supporting trust schools, higher education institutions will work closely with the school and other external partners for example from the business, education or voluntary sectors to develop a strong and shared vision and ethos which forms the basis of a lasting legacy for the school.

There is no single blueprint for trust schools – schools can choose who they want to work with – and how – in order to support their particular needs and aspirations. For example, a university could be part of a trust whose main aim is to encourage progression and access to higher education for pupils who

would not typically be expected to pursue this route. They could use the trust arrangement to develop their staff, participating in staff exchanges to better understand the needs of pupils and young people in a number of educational settings. They could also enhance the school's curriculum offer and support the development of the school's specialism liaising with specific subject departments.

Schools and partners have a lot of flexibility to design the trust that is right for them, and as part of the process, higher education institutions have an excellent opportunity to discuss with the school and their partners the trust model that will work best for them.

Supporting a trust school – University of Warwick and the Kingswood Educational Trust

As the new legislation introducing Trust schools was passing through Parliament, Kingsley College and Woodrush School came together to apply to the Department for pathfinder status for a single trust, the Kingswood Trust, to "raise the achievement and aspirations of all students within the communities served by the Trust".

The schools' motivation was to find strong and supportive external partners to help them achieve further gains in performance. They sought a wide mix of partners from different sectors, and secured support from Worcestershire Local Authority, GKN, Barnardo's Homes and ICAN. Crucial to the mix was to establish a partnership with a leading university. They approached Warwick because of their

existing strong links in gifted and talented education; the university's willingness to offer access to its outstanding arts and technology provision; and its existing record of outreach to local schools and widening participation agenda.

For the university's Vice-Chancellor, Professor Nigel Thrift, the proposal sat well with Warwick's declared aspiration to become one of the world's top 50 universities by its fiftieth birthday in 2015. It also fitted well with the agenda of the large Institute of Education. The University already had close links with many local schools and numbers of staff served as their governors. Ken Sloan, Director of Campus Affairs who is taking forward the project to support the Trust schools, was chair of governors of a Coventry school making the transition to academy status.

Both sides sought an ongoing and active relationship which would deliver tangible benefits. These needed to be mutual if the link was to be sustained. From early discussions it was clear that the schools' focus was on raising aspirations for all pupils, and especially those with little family experience of higher education.

The university was willing to engage in a sustained relationship and to commit sufficient time to make it work. There was a clear synergy between the trust's specification and the university's own goals. The schools were keen to tap into the university's expertise and facilities for drama and creativity, in particular the Capital Centre, established to use theatre to enhance student learning. Another type of expertise sought by the schools was in estates management; they could see benefits from advice and guidance available from a large university managing a huge capital investment.

But the bargain had to be mutually beneficial. For the university, the return will come from a direct engagement with two good local schools, each with a thirst to improve and raise their game rather than rest on a plateau. Unlike traditional forms of outreach which involve contact mainly with sixth formers, membership of the trust – and perhaps of the governing body, since the trust will appoint two governors at each school – engages the university in the strategic and operational processes of a particular school. This will give it a better understanding of the educational journey which students have already travelled at school – for example, what specific skills have been developed or not developed – so that the university can prepare them better, and secure a stronger transition. From this single close relationship, the university is better able to judge the tone and manner of its interactions with all its other partner schools.

The new trust is in its very early days but the two school headteachers are clear that it offers an open-ended opportunity. They expect a growing range of interactions for staff, students and pupils. "Our partners are already opening doors for us. None of us yet knows where exactly these will lead, but we are very keen to explore."

The university is also in discussion with the Westwood School, Barrs Hill School and Kenilworth School and will work to encourage collaboration and partnership across these individual trusts.

Supporting a trust school – University of Exeter and South Dartmoor College

The University of Exeter is strongly committed to widening participation, and this year will spend around £1m – roughly a quarter of its additional income from student fees – on means tested bursaries. It will also spend over £270k on outreach to schools, focused on a partnership with 15 schools and colleges across the southwest peninsula, to be extended by 2011 to include up to 50 schools and colleges.

In 2006 South Dartmoor College asked the university to support its bid to become a “pathfinder” trust school. The university saw support of trust schools as a good fit with its enhanced outreach effort, and agreed to test the waters with this school and simultaneously with a consortium of four others. All five were already working closely with the university as training schools (centres of excellence for training, adult learning and skills transfer).

The university knew South Dartmoor College to be well led and to offer a curriculum of unusual strength and depth. This was confirmed when in May 2007 Ofsted reported that the school’s leadership and management were exemplary, the sixth form was outstanding, and so was the curriculum. “As a specialist sports college, South Dartmoor offers an exemplary range of extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities for students, especially in sport and the performing arts. The school embraces initiatives with enthusiasm and has secured national recognition for its curriculum development”. The governors see trust status as the ideal way to build on these strengths, and to draw in external partners to support and challenge the school to strive even higher. Mike Billington, chair of governors, says: “There’s no point in our becoming a trust school if it doesn’t raise standards.”

Both sides see the “pathfinder” trust relationship as exploratory, without having a fixed idea at the outset of what it will entail or how it will work best. The university ran an afternoon conference to which it invited partners, other neighbouring universities and schools, and wider stakeholders, and found a large measure of support for the proposed new relationship. This encouraged both sides to proceed quickly. The trust came into operation in September.

The first trust meetings have shown a synergy between the objectives of the partners, particularly in the field of action research and CPD. For example, the university has been able to offer study opportunities for a science teacher researching gender choices in post-16 science, notably why so few girls select science subjects other than biology. The university will encourage more teachers from the school to take up accredited Masters or PhD courses, and is willing if necessary to prepare new modules for relevant courses, building on the strengths of the School of Education. More generally, the university feels that the most important thing it can offer is to be the school’s critical external friend, asking challenging but supportive questions.

At this early stage in a new relationship, both sides are optimistic about the difference which the trust can make. The university is not looking for a direct pay-back: it expects the main gainers to be the school, higher education as a whole, and the wider cause of better schools and stronger communities. For its part, the real constraints are likely to be time and workload, and finding the right balance between a close focus on its five trust schools, and a broader engagement with the its 350 other partner schools (150 of them secondary schools) in the area. But it is confident that this balance will come out positive.

6. Academies: planning and implementation processes

The sponsors' vision and leadership are vital to each project. Given the importance of the decisions to the futures of young people and the scale of public funding at stake, the procedures for passing through the various stages of consultation and approval are necessarily rigorous.

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), through the Office of the Schools Commissioner (OSC), works with the lead sponsor and the local authority to develop a match between suitable locations and sponsors to produce an agreed *statement of intent*.

Proposals for the project are worked up into an "*Expression of Interest*" which is agreed by all the local stakeholders and put to Ministers in the DCSF. If Ministers are content to proceed, a *feasibility* phase begins, during which a project manager funded by the DCSF works with the sponsor(s) to develop the detail of the project and conduct a local consultation.

Once this feasibility project is completed successfully, the DCSF enters into a binding *funding agreement* with the sponsor(s). This details the essential characteristics of the academy, including size, location, subject specialism, admission arrangements, age-range

and governance. There is then an implementation phase leading up to *opening of the academy*.

The DCSF and the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT) provide additional support and advice as necessary. Sponsors also learn from each other in all these areas, and the SSAT is a catalyst for mutual engagement between sponsors and the project teams.

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7. Academy governance – the role of the sponsors

Academies are set up as charitable companies to give sponsors and governors broad scope and responsibility for the ethos, strategic direction and leadership. The sponsors of the academy jointly appoint the majority of its governors.

Any project to replace a maintained school with an academy should be endorsed by the local authority at the feasibility stage, and local authorities' views should be taken fully into account at the funding agreement stage.

Like other state-funded schools, the governing bodies of academies include stakeholder governors: a parent governor, a local authority appointee, and generally the Principal *ex officio*. They may also include a teacher and a staff governor, and one or more community representatives.

The governing body is accountable to the Secretary of State for the DCSF through the requirements of the funding agreement. The governing body must publish proceedings of meetings, prepare annual accounts and an annual report, and ensure its accounts are independently audited.

The academy governors are responsible for:

- appointing the Principal;
- employing the staff;
- administering the finances;
- authorising appointments and changes to terms and conditions;
- approving the curriculum, personnel policies and procedures.

The governors are bound by law to act in the best interests of the academy, its pupils and the local community. As a good employer we would expect academies to recognise staff associations.

As well as transforming the life chances of their own students, academies can help drive system-wide improvements in standards through collaboration with other local schools. Almost all established academies have developed positive links with schools of all types in their areas, and are keen to offer support to them, or to learn from them. Admissions arrangements are agreed with the DCSF and are in line with the School Admissions Code.

8. Trust schools: planning and implementation processes

Becoming a trust school requires a formal process that is undertaken by the school and its governing body. There are five stages and the full process is likely to take one year.

Stage One – the school decides who to work with and how and the local authority will be informed that the school is considering trust status. Higher education institutions may wish to make early representations to local schools to express an interest in becoming a trust partner. The school will then hold a governing body meeting to discuss what trust status would mean and the benefits it would bring. As well as securing commitment from external partners, the Heads and governing bodies of all schools should also be signed up at this stage. A *Memorandum of Understanding* is then undertaken with each partner.

Stage Two – the school sets out the vision, partners and rationale of its trust proposals. It then canvasses opinions of all those likely to be affected by the change in status. The local authority is then formally consulted to agree the detail of the land transfer to the trust. The school must decide how the full consultation will be carried out. It will normally last between four to six weeks.

Stage Three – the school publishes formal proposals, including specific details about the trust and its partners, and its governance arrangements. There must follow a four week period to allow for representations.

Stage Four – the school's governing body will decide at a governing body meeting whether to proceed after taking all views and representations into account.

Stage Five – following the school's decision to acquire a trust, the relevant partners will be responsible for setting up the charitable trust, working with the school. The school's land and buildings are transferred to the trust for it to be held on the school's behalf and the school's governing body is reconstituted.

The main responsibility for developing the trust rests with the governing body of the school. Higher education institutions will wish to take a full part in the formulation of the vision for the trust, and the formal consultation process.

9. Trust school governance – the role of the trust

The governing body of a trust school, and not the trust, is responsible for all aspects of the conduct of the school including managing its budget. The trust will appoint members to the governing body. Where a trust appoints governors to a number of schools, each school will retain its distinct identity. The governing body as a whole will set the school's strategic direction.

It will be for the school's existing governing body and the trust to agree at the outset, the precise nature of the trust's involvement, including whether the trust will appoint a majority or a minority of the governors.

If a higher education institution is a trust member, the organisation will nominate a trustee. A trustee is a named individual who is responsible for the day-to-day management of the trust, which would include identifying and appointing governors for the school or schools that the trust supports. Trustees are also 'Directors' in the context of a charitable company.

Experience suggests that the trustee should be a senior member of the university management team, as they will be expected to have a strategic understanding of the school's position in relation

to other organisations and events. Crucially, the trustee must be in a position to make decisions on behalf of their organisation. Trustees can appoint governors from their organisation to sit on the school's governing body.

In a trust school:

- The trust appoints governors and holds the land and assets on trust for the school;
- The governing body is responsible for standards, and delegates operational duties to the head;
- Ofsted will inspect the school and take into account the aims of the trust and the impact of trust governors;
- The local authority provides a school improvement partner and has powers of intervention.

The Charity Commission may intervene if there is mismanagement of the trust.

10. Conclusion – next steps

Higher education institutions have an invaluable role to play in shaping the strategic direction of maintained schools. Universities have clear views about the skills and attitudes which they wish to see in their students, and now have the opportunity to play a leading role in school education. Those schools which have already engaged with universities are enthusiastic about the outcomes to date, and optimistic about the future prospects. Academies and trust schools are the next step for universities wishing to extend their existing partnerships with schools and create durable institutional links.

Sponsoring an academy or supporting a trust school is a significant commitment which any potential sponsor will need to consider carefully. The Departments of Children, Schools and Families and Innovation, Universities and Skills are glad to assist in any way by providing further information and advice.

A set of information sources and web links is attached. These can be accessed directly via the electronic version of this prospectus, which can be downloaded from

www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/academies

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Interlocutors from the higher education sector

The following have indicated willingness to be contacted by interested universities:

Diane Birch, University of Nottingham, University Park, Nottingham, NG7 2RD.

Geoff Hampton, University of Wolverhampton, Wulfruna Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 1SB.

Howard Newby, University of the West of England, Frenchay Campus, Coldharbour Lane, Bristol, BS16 1QY.

Hilary Lowe, Oxford Brookes University, Harcourt Hill Campus, Oxford, OX2 9AT.

Ken Sloan, University of Warwick, University House, Coventry, CV4 8UH.

Steve Smith, University of Exeter, Northcote House, The Queen's Drive, Exeter, EX4 4QJ.

Martin Worton, University College London, South Cloisters, Gower Street, London, WC1E 6BT.

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Academy facts and figures

- The Government is committed to establishing 400 Academies, with 200 open or in the pipeline by 2010.
- 83 academies open in 49 LA areas at September 2007, with 50 more projected by September 2008.
- Between 2005 and 2006 the proportion of students in academies getting five+ A*-C GCSE grades (including English and Maths) rose by 6 percentage points (compared with one percentage point nationally).
- 16 Academies have had full Ofsted inspections. One (Mossbourne) has been graded outstanding in every respect. Four others have been graded as good, with a further 11 graded as satisfactory. Leadership and management of Academies is key to their future success – on this indicator two have been graded as outstanding, 13 good and one satisfactory.
- Academies are popular with parents. On average there are three applications for every place available in Academies. The five brand new Academies, without a predecessor weak or failing school, have nearly six applicants for every place. Academies directly replacing previously weak or failing schools have more than two applicants for each place. Academies replacing weak or failing schools are now filling nearly 25% more places than the schools they replaced.
- The 2007 PwC Academies Evaluation found that: “The general picture in relation to pupil performance in Academies is one of overall improvement against a range of indicators at Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 and post-16 levels. Furthermore, Academies’ progress in terms of pupil achievement has generally exceeded corresponding improvements at a national level and amongst similar schools.”
- The National Audit Office report of February 2007 found that:
 - academies have made good progress in improving GCSE results, and their rate of improvement in GCSE and national tests is substantially better than other schools, including those in similar circumstances;
 - the programme is on track to deliver good value for money;
 - academies have high quality leadership and governance and improved teaching and learning;
 - academies are popular with parents and staff;
 - academies have buildings of good quality benefiting from a well-considered design process.
- 2006 report by NFER for the Local Government Association showed that academies are mainly situated in areas including higher than average proportions of children:
 - eligible for free school meals (FSM);
 - with special educational needs (SEN);
 - of lower Key Stage 2 ability.
- The report also showed that Academies admit higher proportions of all three groups than the proportion living in their local postcode districts.

Trust Schools facts and figures

- The government is actively encouraging schools to acquire trust status and is aiming to have 300 trust schools established by the end of 2007.
- As of September 2007, there are 12 projects involving 30 trust schools.
- Seven of those projects, involving 20 schools are working with an HE partner.
- There are currently 33 Pathfinder projects involving 69 schools.
- Of those, 18 Pathfinder projects involving 29 schools are working with an HE partner.
- There are 69 Early Adopter (EA) trust projects involving 144 schools in the pipeline.

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Q & A

1. How will you ensure that every secondary school has a higher education partnership?

- a. It is not unusual at the moment for a higher education institution to have a relationship with numerous schools, sometimes 100 or more. Of course the depth and intensity of the relationships will vary depending on the aims and objectives of the partners. We do hope that universities will see the option of sponsoring an academy in their area, particularly where the young people attending the school are largely from disadvantaged backgrounds, as an opportunity to support their widening participation activities. The publication of this prospectus is an opportunity to raise awareness of the possibilities and the options available to universities, but we will need to continue discussion with universities to ensure that the environment is right and the appropriate support and advice is in place for institutions to get involved.

2. What is an academy?

- a. Academies are state-funded all-ability schools established by sponsors from the education, business, faith or voluntary sectors, working with partners from the local community. Academies provide an excellent teaching and learning environment, offering a broad and balanced curriculum focused on one or more subject specialisms.

3. How long does it take to establish an academy?

- a. From approval of an expression of Interest to opening in existing buildings is typically around 2 years, with new buildings coming on stream thereafter. But cases may vary.

4. How will academies raise standards?

- a. Academies raise standards, often in the most disadvantaged and challenging areas, by innovative approaches to management, governance, teaching and the curriculum, and by involving highly committed sponsors who bring skills, expertise and resources.

5. How soon will that improvement shine through?

- a. New academies are unlikely to become successful overnight, given what is often a long legacy of under-achievement. However, there is a growing body of evidence that they are making significant progress – faster than the national average and significantly faster than other schools in similar circumstances. Academies teachers have high expectations of every pupil. Good teaching, excellent facilities and motivated pupils will deliver sustained improvements in standards.

6. How are academies assessed, inspected and held accountable?

- a. The DCSF's advisers work closely with academies to monitor progress and give support. Ofsted carries out monitoring visits to each new academy in its second year, and a full inspection (with published report) in its third year. Extensive longitudinal evaluations have been carried out by the National Audit Office and independent evaluators.

7. Does opening an academy adversely affect other schools?

- a. Quite the opposite. Academies are part of the local family of schools, sharing their facilities and expertise with other schools and the wider community, contributing to raising standards across the whole area.

8. Are academies selective schools?

- a. No, they are all-ability schools. Like other specialist secondary schools they can admit up to 10 per cent of pupils each year on the basis of aptitude for their specialism subject to regulations. Admission arrangements are agreed with the Department and are in line with the School Admissions Code.

9. Do academies get more money than other schools?

- a. We invest heavily in academies' set-up and buildings, to ensure that the new places created are excellent. The per-pupil running costs are the same as for any other local state school in similar circumstances – parity of funding is essential if innovations are to be replicable.

10. Do academies have to deal with lots of bureaucracy?

- a. Establishing a new academy requires rigorous enquiries because large sums of money are at stake. But we can tailor the process to the needs of each type of project, rather than applying a rigid template.

11. What is a trust school?

- a. A trust school is simply a foundation school with a charitable trust that forges a long-term sustainable relationship with external partners to create a new source of dynamism and to help raise standards. We know such partnerships work from the example set by voluntary aided and specialist schools – they've been able to draw enormous energy, drive and expertise from the contribution of their foundations and sponsors to develop their individual character and ethos. The benefits have been clear in the results they have achieved and in their popularity with parents.

12. Is trust status just for secondary schools?

- a. No. Primary and special schools can also become trust schools. There are both primary and special schools involved in the trust school pathfinders.

13. What is the difference between an academy and a trust School?

- a. Academies and trust schools are two strands in the diverse range of options designed to deliver real improvements in school attainment. Each is designed to work in different circumstances. The academies programme primarily targets secondary schools with the lowest levels of attainment and in the most deprived communities. As such they represent a radical solution designed to provide a step change in education in failing schools.

Acquiring a trust is a way for a range of schools (primary, secondary and special) in different circumstances to raise standards, from those that are currently under-performing to those that are leading the way in the education sector as a whole. There are no specific criteria for which schools can become trust schools: the decision is one for the governing body to make.

14. Will trusts profit from their involvement?

- a. No. Trusts will be charitable not for profit organisations and will not benefit financially from their involvement with a school or schools.

15. Is there any funding available to support schools who want to pursue trust status?

- a. Any primary, secondary or special school that is interested in becoming a trust school can apply for the 'early adopter' programme by submitting an Expression of Interest form by 28 February 2007. Schools will be eligible for a small amount of funding (up to a maximum of £10,000) to assist with set-up costs that they may incur when going through the process to acquire a trust.

Schools will also benefit from a high level of support from the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT) and the Youth Sport Trust (YST) as well as having access to a toolkit and model documentation.

16. What freedoms do trust schools get?

- a. Trust schools will benefit from flexibilities similar to those already enjoyed by foundation schools and voluntary aided schools. They will set their own admission arrangements (operating within the law and acting in accordance with the Admissions Code) and employ their staff, while complying with the national School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document. The trust will hold the land and assets of the school on trust for the duration of its relationship with the school.

17. What difference will being a trust school make to the school's funding?

- a. A trust school will continue to receive its funding from the local authority on the same basis as other local schools – and funding will be delegated to the governing body, not the trust. There will be no additional funding from the local authority for a trust school, and there is no expectation that the trust will provide the school with additional funding (although of course they will be free to do so if they choose).

Web links to key documents/data

Setting up an academy:

http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/academies/setting_up/

Directory of academies

http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/academies/academies_directory/

Annual PriceWaterhouseCoopers academies evaluation reports (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th)

<http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/academies/publications/>

National Audit Office evaluation report

<http://www.nao.org.uk/pn/06-07/0607254.htm>

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Glossary: types of state school

All state schools must teach a broad and balanced curriculum (subject to any agreed curricular specialism); are inspected by Ofsted; and must comply with legislation and guidance concerning employment, admissions and other matters. The main categories are:

Maintained: a state school whose recurrent funded is provided through a local authority. The great majority of state schools are maintained schools. Leaving aside community special and foundation special schools, there are three main types: community, foundation and voluntary.

- **Community:** a maintained school whose assets are owned by the local authority which is also the employer of staff, the admissions authority, and the provider of premises.
- **Foundation:** a maintained school where the governing body is the employer of staff and the admissions authority, and either:
 - has a foundation – either long established, or acquired under the Education and Inspections Act 2006. Such schools are usually known as **Trust schools**. As described elsewhere in the prospectus, the foundation or trust often includes external partners from different sectors, including education; or
 - has no foundation.
- **Voluntary:** a maintained school, the majority having a religious character which will reflect that of a long-established foundation.. The two categories are:
 - **Voluntary controlled:** the foundation usually owns the land and buildings but the local authority, employs the staff and (unless delegated) is the admissions authority.
 - **Voluntary aided:** the foundation usually owns the land and buildings and the governing body normally contributes a

minimum of 10 per cent of the costs of capital projects. The governing body employs the staff and is the admissions authority. Voluntary aided schools with a religious character have additional freedoms in the employment of staff and the RE curriculum.

Academy: A state school which is not maintained by a local authority but is centrally funded for initial set-up, and receives recurrent grants at the same level as local maintained schools. The school's sponsors commit expertise, leadership and/or funds, and appoint the majority of the governing body. The school is the employer and admissions authority.

City technology college: a school sharing many characteristics of an academy. Most CTCs have already converted to academy status.

Specialist: any state secondary school (including an academy) which has adopted a curricular specialism. Such a school must still deliver a full and balanced curriculum.

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www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications

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