



ACADEMIES

Schools to make a difference

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Academies Sponsor
Prospectus 2005

Academies: Schools to make a difference

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Introduction

England has many excellent schools. But it needs more; and it needs them nationwide - in every community, including those where parents and children have been failed for too long by inadequate schools, and where the existing structure offers little confidence that change will take place rapidly and on the scale needed.

Academies are a radically new type of independent state school, intended to transform education in areas where the status quo is simply not good enough. They are sponsored and managed by independent sponsors. Their buildings and facilities - either new build or remodelling of an existing school building - are financed and built in a partnership between the sponsor and the government. Their annual revenue funding comes entirely from the government at a level comparable to other local schools. No fees are paid by parents.

'You get a wonderful sense of satisfaction, a sense of doing something very special for thousands of children who need help. If I can make a success of this, it will be the most important thing I will have done in my life.' Sponsor

Independent status is crucial in giving Academies the freedom and flexibility to succeed. It enables them to do whatever is necessary to provide effective teaching and learning, organisation, staffing and governance. Strong, confident, ambitious leadership, effective management, a clear vision, and knowing how to achieve that vision, are essential ingredients in their success.

The academies programme was launched four years ago, as a development of the successful City Technology College (CTC) model. We are building on the success of that model and using the experience of CTCs to develop the Academies programme. Many CTCs are also converting to Academy status, and in the process rising to the challenge of taking over failing or weak schools in their area.

CTCs are all ability schools based in difficult urban areas which achieve some excellent results. In 2004 11 CTCs achieved over 75% of their pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades at GCSE, and of these 2 CTCs achieved 100%

In 2003, 8 of the 14 existing CTCs were in the top 40% of schools in terms of value added, and 3 of these were in the top 25% of schools.

For some CTCs there were significant hurdles to overcome. Harris CTC, which replaced a weak school (in its first year take up of free school meals was more than double the national average) achieved only 27% 5+ A* - C in its first two years of opening but within 5 years results were up to 64%.

Early indications are that Academies are bringing about improvements in behaviour and attendance and improved educational performance. They are also creating a culture shift in ethos and expectations. But many Academies replace some of our most challenging schools. Inevitably, it will take some time to turn these schools around and for Academies to demonstrate that they have had a real and lasting impact on standards.

'Any successful company needs a social responsibility, looking to put something back. When I looked round to see what we should do, it was fairly obvious that the biggest need was education, to give young people a better start in life, to give them the opportunity to be their best.'
Sponsor

In 2003, their first year, the average 5+ A*-C GCSE results in the three open Academies was 24%, compared to an average of 16% in their predecessor schools in the previous year.

In 2004 the Academy cohort achieved close to 30% 5+ A*-Cs. This included improvements at Capital City Academy, Brent, from 14% to 29% and of 26% to 33% at the City Academy, Bristol.

We are now seeking suitable sponsors for 200 Academies in England. Each Academy is unique - and so too is its sponsor. Because of the programme's focus on the individual character of each Academy we are confident that the success of Academies will be sustained as the programme expands. Given the remarkable enthusiasm shown by existing and potential new sponsors, we are also confident that there will be many more sponsors with the values and commitment needed to realise our ambitions.

This prospectus explains the key elements of the programme and how sponsors can become engaged. But in truth, the best introduction is to visit an Academy, and feel the palpable excitement and commitment to excellence and social transformation which is driving the sponsors and the schools they have inspired.

The role of sponsors

Sponsors come from a wide range of backgrounds, including individual philanthropists, business, faith communities, and existing private schools and educational foundations. Some are established educational providers; many bring a record of success in other enterprises, which they are able to apply to their Academies in partnership with experienced school managers. We welcome this broad diversity, which is reflected in the character of the Academies being established. What unites sponsors is a commitment to educational excellence, and a capacity to bring it about. The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) provides project management support and funding, and agrees the precise scope and design of each Academy individually with each sponsor.

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Sponsors bring a commitment to the best possible education for students in their Academies. They bring a challenge to traditional thinking on how schools are run and what they should be like for students; challenge on how staff should be employed and incentivised; and challenge also on what the buildings should look like and how they should function.

Sponsors bring fresh ideas. Above all, they bring a vision which inspires and motivates everyone involved - students, parents, staff and the community.

In return, sponsors know that they are providing something which will change and enhance the life chances of their pupils and, often, of the most deprived children. They also know they are putting something back into communities - often communities they know well - which may be struggling. A successful Academy will help regenerate and revive such communities.

The dedication and real excitement for education and change demonstrated by existing sponsors is infectious, and the best inspiration for those considering becoming sponsors themselves. Existing sponsors have joined together to establish an Academies Sponsors Trust (AST), which provides assistance and resource to sponsors involved in all stages of the Academies process, including potential new sponsors. Information about the Trust is enclosed.

Sponsors make a charitable donation of 10% of the building costs, up to a total of £2 million (or £1.5m for an Academy based on remodelled rather than completely new buildings) towards the initial capital cost of their Academy. Sponsors can also join together to provide smaller amounts of sponsorship as long as the overall sponsorship reaches £2m.

Sponsorship is a welcome addition to the funding put in by the government. But financial sponsorship is only one part of the contribution which sponsors make to the success of their Academies. More important is their vision, and the commitment which they and their networks and organisations make to the design, leadership and management of their Academies, in partnership with the communities they are to serve.

What makes Academies different

Academies:

- are independent of local education authority (LEA) challenge and support - though free to engage with LEAs and buy services from them if they want;
- have a wide range of specialisms or combination of specialisms e.g. science and the environment;
- have innovative approaches to leadership, governance, organisation, staffing and the curriculum;
- spread good practice and innovation throughout the system rather than being isolated centres of excellence;
- teach a broad and balanced curriculum;
- serve the local community in which they are established, including sharing their facilities with the community;
- work collaboratively with other schools, businesses and the local community;
- have innovative buildings with facilities which match the best in the maintained sector;

'We've designed the Academy to be welcoming. We open at 7am and we intend to be open until late at night, so it will be a school not only for the students but also for the parents and the community. Next year we'll see community and parental classes happening.' Headteacher

'I've changed since I've been at the Academy from being a silly little boy to growing up and thinking "Oh yeah, I can actually do this thing." I love coming to school. Really, I'd sleep here overnight if I had the chance.' Student

are funded at a level comparable to other local schools with similar characteristics;

are all ability schools and have admissions arrangements which comply with admissions law and the code of practice.

All Academies have at least one specialist centre of curriculum excellence, chosen by the sponsor in consultation with the local community to be served by the Academy. We encourage sponsors to think broadly about what specialisms would be appropriate for the circumstances of their Academy. Possible specialisms include business and enterprise, citizenship, performing arts, modern foreign languages, ICT or Sport and Science.

Academies teach the National Curriculum core subjects and carry out key stage 3 (KS3) assessment in English, Maths and Science. In seeking to meet the needs of all pupils Academies are also developing innovative 14 - 19 provision, including a range of vocational courses, often in collaboration with other schools, colleges of further education and local businesses. For example, The West London Academy, Ealing is setting up a 14 - 19 vocational centre in collaboration with the LEA, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and an LEA-maintained school.

Academies form part of local provision and serve their local areas, working with other schools, businesses and the community to provide education which meets the needs of the community. They also work with LEAs to ensure a co-ordinated approach to admissions. This includes consulting the LEA on their admissions arrangements each year, and complying with the code of practice which applies to all maintained schools.

Academies are inclusive schools and they must provide for pupils of different abilities who are drawn from the area in which the school is located. They do not select, but in some circumstances they can admit up to 10% of pupils on the basis of aptitude in certain specialisms.

Arrangements for pupils with Special Educational Needs and for excluded pupils are in line with those in ordinary maintained schools. Many Academies also have specialist facilities or resources for pupils with Special Educational Needs. For example, Mossbourne Academy, Hackney provides specialist resources for pupils with autism; King's Academy, Middlesbrough provides for hearing and visually impaired children.

Where will Academies go?

We intend to have 200 Academies open or in development by 2010, of which about 60 will be in London, where the challenge is great and where more school places are needed.

Academies will focus on areas of historically weak educational performance, including the establishment of entirely new schools in such areas and the replacement of existing weak and failing schools. We will make a case by case assessment of the need for an Academy. This will take into account educational performance, the level of deprivation in the area concerned and parental demand, as well as the quality and suitability of each specific proposal.

Academies are not a one-size fits all approach to raising standards. Their size and character are for the sponsor to agree with us after consultation with the local education authority and the community. We particularly welcome innovative approaches, including, for example, different age ranges from 3-19 to 16-19; different sizes; Academies with boarding provision; Academies with enhanced provision for students with special educational needs; and new ideas for involving parents more actively in the development and governance of schools.

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How do Academies help to drive school innovation?

Academies are at the forefront of educational innovation, in the provision of one or more specialisms, the content and delivery of the curriculum, the use of cutting edge ICT, the development of new management and staffing structures and their ground breaking design and facilities.

Greig City Academy is providing students with the opportunity to study AS Psychology by utilising video conferencing facilities provided by a distance learning service, supported by tutorials given by Academy staff.

The West London Academy is providing a co-ordinated support service for all pupils across the 5 - 19 age range by establishing a multi-disciplinary social services team. This will provide a highly focused support mechanism for students and their families.

At Walsall Academy the school day is organised into two sessions, 10 per week, in which students spend the whole morning or afternoon in a curriculum area.

Academies' work with other schools and the wider community provides them with an opportunity to show others what works and spread good practice throughout the system.

The Academies programme also provides excellent opportunities for Academies to develop innovative working relationships with independent schools, and to share knowledge and experience between the sectors.

Similarly the Higher Education sector can make a significant contribution to Academies, either by co-sponsorship or through the development of close working links and partnerships.

The Kings School, Canterbury is contributing up to £250k per year sponsorship through shared curriculum materials, joint arts and community ventures and advice on a tutorial system to the Folkestone Academy.

Manchester Academy and Lincoln Minster School are working together with three primary schools on a 'Building Bridges' project to support transition from KS2 to KS3.

Liverpool University is providing sponsorship in kind to the Liverpool North Academy in the form of staff and curriculum advice, support and development.

'People say "It's a failing school, in an area I wouldn't want to send my children." But they need to come and visit, see what's going on and how good the relationship is between staff and pupils. You almost want to move in yourself. To be in this environment is such an experience for the children.'
Parent

'The change in the children and their behaviour to and from school is unbelievable and a credit to the staff.'
Local newspaper editor

Academies raising standards

Academies raise standards by:

- Creating a positive ethos and approach to learning, supported by the drive and experience of a sponsor. They are introducing innovative developments into the content and delivery of teaching and learning.

Capital City Academy and the Academy at Peckham are trialling exciting uses of ICT for the teaching of English as an Additional Language (EAL).

At the City Academy, Bristol, the very successful link with the sponsor, Bristol City Football Club, means that the sports facilities will meet the challenge of community, professional sport and school needs.

At the City of London Academy, Southwark, innovative financial literacy programmes have been developed so that cross-curricular schemes of work include aspects of personal finance.

- Raising expectations. Results in key stage assessments are showing startling improvements. And behaviour, attendance and punctuality has also improved.

In 2004, at The City Academy, Bristol, Key Stage 3 SATs in English and Mathematics show a 9% improvement compared to the performance in the last year of the predecessor school.

At Greig City Academy, Haringey, attendance rates climbed by 5 percentage points to 90% in the autumn term 2003.

In its first year Manchester Academy reduced exclusions by more than 80%.

- Building partnerships with the local community and businesses helps to create an exciting and challenging curriculum and provide opportunities for pupils to experience different approaches to education.

Greig City Academy is providing an adult learning programme in partnership with the Haringey Adult Learning Service. In its first term, seven short taster courses - ranging from ICT to Beginners Turkish - were successfully provided.

Walsall Academy has started to host professional development sessions for teachers from other local schools.

Students at The Business Academy, Bexley, are given the opportunity to practise their active citizenship skills within their communities, for example, teaching Italian to primary classes and teaching senior citizens IT skills.

- Building links with the international community widens pupils' educational experiences and broadens their horizons by providing them with an opportunity to share their experience, knowledge and views on an international scale.

Capital City Academy, Brent has developed a three way link with schools in Vredenburg, South Africa and Washington, USA, which will enable the pupils in all three schools to work collaboratively.

Students at The Business Academy, Bexley have made links with a school in Vietnam and the students are learning about the use of intermediate technology in developing countries.

Djanogly City Academy, Nottingham, has built some extremely innovative links with schools in China, which include students experiencing the education at each other's school and Chinese students taking A levels at the Academy.

'The Academy has transformed my job. I'm now in a position to make a real difference to the lives of students from the local area.'
Teacher

- Providing innovative and inspiring school buildings and facilities designed to provide an excellent environment for education and implementing innovative approaches to teaching and learning using the very best in new technology;

The Business Academy, Bexley, was shortlisted for the RIBA Stirling Prize 2004, awarded to the architects of the building that has made the greatest contribution to British architecture in the past year.

The Djanogly City Academy, Nottingham leads the way in laptop and wireless technology with extensive one to one use of laptops and tablet computers for 50% of curriculum time. It is also providing an exciting vocational curriculum for students in other schools in the area.

In its first year, Capital City Academy's Junior Athletes Education Programme attracted 15 national standard athletes.

What are the financial arrangements?

So far as capital investment is concerned, Academies mainly replace schools which have received very little recent investment. Academies will normally be in new, but sometimes remodelled, buildings, fit for the 21st Century. These will encourage innovation and effective teaching and learning. They will be flexible enough to meet changing curricular requirements. They will be built to last and to operate cost effectively.

Each Academy is designed and built on the basis of benchmarks derived from the best new maintained schools. The same benchmarks are used for the Building Schools for the Future programme. One of the benefits of involving private sector sponsors is their expertise in helping to deliver projects on time and to cost.

Sponsors provide 10% of these capital costs up to a cap of £2m. Where an Academy is in remodelled buildings, the sponsor's contribution is capped at £1.5m. Generally, we expect sponsor's capital contributions to be made over the 2 or 3 years of the building project.

Sponsors may also contribute smaller amounts of sponsorship towards a single Academy as part of a consortium of sponsors, as long as overall sponsorship reaches £2m. The Department can broker these partnerships.

There are also a number of independent organisations entering the market, such as the Academies Fund, which are looking to act as brokering houses for sponsors who want to contribute less than £2m sponsorship (contact details for the Academies Fund can be found at the end of the prospectus).

The Government will provide the balance of up to £20m - £30m, so the gearing achieved by sponsors is substantial.

Recurrent funding levels match those of other local schools with similar characteristics. Academies do not receive more generous funding. Their success will not be dismissed as the result of extra resources unavailable to other schools.

Questions and Answers

Q: What will my role be?

A: Your role is to provide drive and ambition directly and through others. You will appoint the majority of the Governors and with them lead the strategic direction of the Academy, offering challenge and support to the Principal and senior management team.

Q: What help will I get before and after the Academy opens and how long will it take to open the academy?

A: Each project is run by professional project managers. There is also help from the Department at that time and when the Academy opens. Projects normally take 3 years from initial agreement to doors opening.

Q: What is the role of the LEA in running the school?

A: The LEA will have a member on the governing body and you will need to work with it on issues like admissions, but it will have no direct control in the running of the school. We expect all Academies to have a positive relationship with their LEA.

Q: How does the Department fit in?

A: We provide support throughout the process including finding the project managers.

Q: What restrictions will there be on how I can run the Academy?

A: These will be set out in a Funding Agreement. The main restrictions concern admissions. Academies will also be required to act in line with company and charity law.

Q: Are there rules about the admission of pupils that the Academy would be expected to follow?

A: The Academy is required to follow the guidance in the Department's code of practice which applies to all maintained schools.

Q: Do I have the freedom to choose my own staff and governors?

A: In the main you may choose your staff, but where there is a predecessor school, Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment (TUPE) will apply. You will appoint a majority of the governors. One will be appointed by the LEA and one elected by parents.

Q: How much influence will I have over other things that will shape the Academy such as its specialism, ethos and uniform etc?

A: Issues of ethos, specialism and uniform are entirely for you. There are some requirements on the curriculum that you will need to meet largely to do with its breadth, inclusion of core subjects and testing. But the vast majority of the detail will be for you.

Further Information

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Prolog ref: ACA Intro Guide

DFES no: DFES/0851 2004

ISBN: 1 84478 310 3