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[Home](#) > [Setting up school partnerships](#)

Guidance

# School partnership case studies

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Contents

[Introduction](#)

[Case study 1](#)

[Case study 2](#)

[Case study 3](#)

[Case study 4](#)

[Case study 5](#)

[Case study 6](#)

[Case Study 7](#)

## Introduction

These case studies will help you to identify ways of setting up and managing a partnership that works for all partner organisations.

## Case study 1

### Sponsoring a MAT, sharing resources and widening participation in higher education

A university sponsors a multi-academy trust (MAT), which currently comprises of 2 primary schools, a secondary school and a special school.

The schools are in an area of significant socio-economic disadvantage that is a cold spot for participation in higher education.

## **Type of support**

The university provides significant support for the schools, including governance support at trust and school level:

- financial, legal, estates, press and PR support (through a shared resources model)
- access to the university's specialist facilities and equipment (including science laboratories)
- a vibrant partnership between the special school and the university's autism research centre
- schools in the trust also have access to activities run by the university to widen participation in higher education

### **Boost that Grade**

Each March this initiative targets mathematics GCSE students on the 4/5 grade boundary with interventions such as revision sessions. The university plans to expand this into science and English for 2019/20.

### **Fast Forward week**

Each year the university delivers a week long university taster session to Year 10/11 students from schools without sixth forms. The sessions are for students who will be the first generation in their family to progress to higher education.

### **Children's University**

The university launched a Children's University in 2015. The scheme offers 5 to 14 year olds the chance to obtain their own Children's University degree by collecting credits through extra-curricular activities.

The university provides all of these services to the schools free of charge, as part of the university's civic mission.

## **Monitoring**

The partnership pays very close attention to Progress 8 and Attainment 8 scores. It focuses on children and young people making excellent progress in their academic, cultural and sporting achievements, as well as their personal development.

## **Results**

In August 2017, one of the secondary schools was the second highest ranked

school in the county for progress at A-level, and 32 of the students progressed to a range of universities.

In July 2018, the National Autistic Society awarded the special school 'advanced' status.

## **Case study 2**

### **Widening participation and employing a partnership co-ordinator**

In February 2017, a university entered into a partnership with a school in an area where few pupils go on to higher education. Ofsted had also recently placed the school under special measures.

#### **Widening participation**

The school and the university worked together to recruit a Widening Participation (WP) co-ordinator to work in the school for 4 days a week. Initially, the co-ordinator studied the Ofsted inspection report and the school improvement plan with the headteacher to work out where the university could provide support.

#### **Co-ordinator role**

The university's Access Agreement contains a commitment to provide 3 activities a year to a target number of the school's students to raise key stage 4 attainment at the school relative to the national average. The university assesses this work against their Logic Model for all of their outreach activity.

The WP co-ordinator working in the school produces termly reports for the governing bodies of both institutions, which rest upon detailed records of the activities each of the school's students has attended during the year. The partners also use this information to demonstrate the impact of the partnership to Ofsted inspectors, who visit the school on regular monitoring visits.

#### **How to approach a school**

Based on their experience, the university's widening participation team have said:

- “ We would not go ahead with an activity without talking to the school leadership to decide the best approach. For example, our programme of work for the next year has been to the school's senior leadership team for approval.”
- “ Simply 'dropping' access work onto a school without consulting them is not a good approach, particularly as schools have multiple priorities. We also do not think you should place too much emphasis on waiting and getting every facet of your plan in place before you go into a school.”
- “ Schools are all very different, and you will not know what they need until you make contact with them. Go in with an open mind and know that the realities might be very different from what you expect!”

## **Case study 3**

### **Rethinking staff appraisal**

A multi-academy trust and a university are rethinking staff appraisals and professional learning through a partnership, making use of external evaluation expertise.

#### **Staff appraisals**

In November 2017, the university joined with a multi-academy trust and their not-for-profit partners to expand an existing partnership. The partnership focused on redeveloping approaches to staff appraisal and professional development in 3 primary schools.

Staff appraisal often takes the form of 1:1 meetings with staff working on their objectives individually throughout the course of the year. The 3 schools in Blackpool and Manchester wanted to test a collaborative approach to staff appraisal that made use of group coaching.

#### **Monitoring and evaluation**

A not-for-profit organisation, with experience of monitoring and evaluating school based programmes, led on the impact evaluation for the project. The organisations involved made important decisions early on to make the partnership

manageable and to support evaluation. They agreed to trial the approach initially with support staff, including teaching assistants, key workers and lunchtime organisers, because these roles are often provided with less explicit professional development support.

## **How it worked**

The 3 organisations agreed the basic structure of the project with input from everyone involved. The university funded the support and assigned a professor with expertise in coaching and staff development to work with the partnership. Members of staff, trained in coaching techniques, would facilitate small group staff appraisal sessions. Individuals would identify their own personal development objectives and, as a group, agree a common objective focusing on pupil outcomes. These would then be monitored and openly reflected on in similar sessions throughout the year.

Those taking part in the project:

- consented to take part in interviews
- completed questionnaires before and after the trial

This meant that the evaluators of the programme could measure engagement with the school community and a variety of related traits.

## **Next steps**

As the project now comes to its conclusion, early results suggest positive findings across a range of different staff roles. The not-for-profit organisation, multi-academy trust and university are opening the trial up to more teaching staff and are looking to disseminate the work in academic forums and national collaborative networks such as Challenge Partners.

# **Case study 4**

## **Sponsoring an academy and forming a MAT**

A university has sponsored an academy in a socially and economically deprived area for the past 9 years.

In 2017, a grammar school joined the university and academy to form a new multi-academy trust.

## **How it works**

The university and the partnership leadership team work closely together to create and review the strategic direction and priorities for the trust and for each school.

This approach is mutually beneficial. For example, the partnership includes a graduate secondary teaching school scheme, where students combine part-time postgraduate study and teacher training whilst based in school. Already the scheme has produced a handful of outstanding newly qualified teachers who have completed their Masters programme, with some continuing on to PhD study.

On visiting the academy in 2017, Ofsted inspectors noted the success of this innovative teacher training strategy, linking it to increased pupil progress in the humanities, modern foreign languages and science.

## **Monitoring and evaluation**

Data and evidence have been an essential underpinning element to the partnership. The university is a founding member of the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT) and they have developed a rich data set of over 30,000 outreach participants nationally in the last 10 years. In partnership, they are currently undertaking research to baseline all participating students, using both quantitative and qualitative methods so that they are able to build a longitudinal study of impact.

## **Working on a MAT proposal or sponsor application**

Another university who have recently set up a MAT in the West Midlands employed a co-ordinator to manage their project and to communicate the aims of the partnership internally. That university have shared the following reflections on their process:

“ Make sure you play to your strengths. We don't have an education faculty, so working with primary and secondary schools was less of a priority for us. Our strengths are in teaching, student experience, employability and careers planning, so it made sense for us to work with sixth-form colleges. For a student, there's a real similarity between college and university: students are specialising, gaining more autonomy in their learning. The university has established links with employers and therefore can add real value to student

opportunity.”

“ There were also a number of practical reasons for the arrangement. We knew we could offer an economy of scale, and we wanted to roll out some of the work we’re doing on emotional resilience in those academies. We also knew that it would enhance our access agreement and we could start to measure the arrangement and record the impact we were having.”

## **Case study 5**

### **Working with multiple partners on a free school**

A selective 16-19 free school in Tottenham opened in 2017 with sponsorship from one independent school and a business partner. It developed strong links with these 2 entities and a further 9 independent schools in its first year. In its second year, it has continued with the original 2 sponsors and 8 of the original independent schools. The arrangement is based on the example of a highly successful sixth-form college in Newham that offers disadvantaged children a rigorous curriculum in order to prepare them for entrance to some of the country’s best universities.

### **Who the partners are**

The new school has a lead educational partner (a local independent school), which contributed the equivalent of six full time teachers in year one and 5 full time teachers in year two. It also contributes financially, offers significant governance support, and assists across non-academic areas such as HR and IT.

The school also has a business partner (a Premiership football club), which provided the site, as well as contributing financial and governance support.

Initially, the lead educational partner played a co-ordinating role and held conversations with other independent schools in the area to secure further support. This resulted in the recruitment of 9 other partner schools from the independent sector, who contribute financially and through in-kind support such as seconding teachers.

Each of these partner schools is responsible for developing one of the school’s academic departments, contributing specialist teachers and support staff as required. Some schools have designated a member of staff as a ‘point person’ to co-ordinate their relationship with the free school, with responsibility for ensuring delivery of the work against the stated aims.

The lead school have also appointed a co-ordinator to oversee all of the work, ensure smooth delivery, and address issues as they arise.

## **How the arrangement is formalised**

The arrangement between the school and each of its educational partners is set out in a separate Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that details the type of support and the timescale for delivery. The partners update these MOUs periodically to reflect the changing needs of the school and the capacity of its partners.

Individual annual meetings take place between the free school and each of its partners to assess priorities for the following academic year.

## **Case study 6**

### **Targeting support**

A collaborative programme between a university, an independent school, and a group of local schools aims to maximise students' academic potential through sessions delivered by the partner organisations. The programme begins for the children in school year 5 and continues, with the same cohort, through to the end of year 6, before they transition into secondary school.

### **How the pupils are recruited**

The project is funded by the university. When recruiting each cohort, the university explain to their partner schools that the funding of the programme is dependent on the pupils involved satisfying their widening participation criteria, though secondary factors for selection include disadvantage measures used by schools such as free school meals eligibility.

The following text comes from a leaflet produced by the university to help schools select several of their pupils for the scheme.

WP Criteria – We ask that all pupils are in the first generation of their family to enter higher education.



And we ask that all pupils meet one or more of the following criteria:

- they are a looked after child or young adult carer
- they have a declared disability
- they are from an area with low participation in higher education

You may find it helpful when targeting pupils to check if their postcode falls within Quintile 1 for the POLAR3 youth participation measure.

Where applicants sit outside this criteria, priority would then be given based upon other indicators such as:

- Free School Meal (FSM) eligibility
- individual circumstances that mean they will need to overcome other barriers to learning/progression

## Case Study 7

### Using a broad area partnership

In 2003 local state and independent schools in Southwark, South East London set up a learning partnership to support students from in and around the London Borough. The partnership is now well established and growing; in the academic year 2017 to 2018, it consisted of 3 independent schools and 12 state schools.

The partnership aims to ensure that staff throughout its member schools collaborate with one another and are able to share best practice, exchange ideas and deliver joint projects.

Recent examples of activities organised through the partnership include subject specific CPD for teachers, a shared programme of lectures for students, parents and teachers covering topics including art, economics, geography and pastoral care.

Interactive events for pupils held in a single term include a meet the authors event for World Book Day, a content and language integrated learning challenge combining Spanish with maths and science, and a stimulating interdisciplinary conference on the interface between science and religion for physics, philosophy and religious education students. The schools open their higher education fairs to students from other partner schools and jointly offer Oxbridge and medical applicant training.

The partnership is co-directed by the heads of one of the state and one of the

independent schools and employs a part time co-ordinator to facilitate the work of the partnership.

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