



## *A Centre for Educational Success Briefing on*

### **ACADEMIES**

An Academy is a school that is publicly funded, supported by one or more sponsors and operates independently of the local authority in which it is located.

#### **THE NATIONAL ACADEMIES PROGRAMME**

By September 2007 there will be 82 academies in 51 local authorities and 50 more are due to open by September 2008.

The Government is committed to establishing 400 academies in all. The sponsors of academies include educational foundations, universities, philanthropists, businesses, private school trusts and faith groups.

#### **THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ACADEMY PROGRAMME**

The concept of an academy was devised as a means of combating perpetually failing schools in areas of economic disadvantage, with the aim of raising the aspirations and achievement of pupils in these areas.

Ultimately, the Academies Programme aims to challenge the culture of educational under-attainment and to deliver real improvements in standards.

Most academies are located in areas of disadvantage. They either replace one or more existing schools facing challenging circumstances, or are established where there is a need for additional school places.

There are greater proportions of black and minority ethnic (BME) pupils in academies and there will inevitably be a proportionately greater impact on their educational progress and life chances than on that of other groups of pupils.

The figures below show the ethnic breakdown for the 17 academies set up before September 2005.

<b>ETHNIC GROUP / BACKGROUND</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
White	53.7
Mixed	5.4
Asian (except Chinese)	11.8
Chinese	1.1
Black (Caribbean/ African/ Other)	20.8
Other Ethnic Group	3.9
Unclassified	3.4

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) expects Local Authorities to consider the establishment of academies as part of their strategic plans to increase diversity in secondary provision and improve educational opportunities.

The Government states that:

- Academies are committed to educating the most disadvantaged and difficult children and improving the education life chances for young people in deprived areas of England
- Academies will have innovative approaches to management, governance, teaching and learning

## **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE ACADEMY PROGRAMME**

### **THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES**

- To challenge the culture of educational under-attainment and to deliver real improvements in standards
- To increase diversity in secondary provision and improve educational opportunities
- To offer a broad and balanced curriculum to pupils of all abilities focusing especially on one or more subject areas

- As an academy becomes successfully established, it will share its expertise and facilities with other schools and the wider community
- Academies will play a key part in the regeneration of communities by providing a focus for learning for its pupils, their families and other local people
- To help break the cycle of underachievement in areas of social and economic deprivation whether in inner cities, suburban or rural areas
- Academies will offer local solutions to local needs

## **THE NATIONAL AUDIT OFFICE**

- To improve educational attainment in deprived areas, both by replacing poorly performing schools and by building new schools where more school places are required
- To drive up standards by raising achievement across a local area
- To increase choice and diversity by creating a new type of local school that provides a good standard of education

## **DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ACADEMIES AND MAINTAINED SCHOOLS**

### **FUNDING**

- Unlike maintained schools, academies are set up as companies limited by guarantee with charitable status
- Up to £2 millions of an academy's initial set-up costs comes from the sponsor. The rest of the set up funding is supplied by the DCSF. Maintained schools receive all of their funding from the DCSF and the Local Authority.
- The money from the DCSF is not allocated to the academy through the Local Authority but directly to the Governing Body.
- As charitable companies, academies must prepare and file annual accounts with the Charity Commissioners, and ensure that their accounts are independently audited. Annual accounts for maintained schools are audited through the Local Authority.

- An academy is able to keep the funding for a pupil's school place after the pupil has been permanently excluded. This does not happen with a school maintained by a Local Authority.

## **GOVERNANCE**

- Academies are publicly funded independent schools. As they therefore fall outside the remit of Local Authorities they are governed and run entirely by their own Governing Body (which usually consists of around 13 governors)
- Unlike maintained schools, governance procedures are not prescribed in primary or secondary legislation. This is set down in model Memorandum and Articles laid down by the DCSF as part of the Funding Agreement
- Governors of academies are responsible for the employment of staff, the appointment of the principal, agreeing levels of pay and conditions for staff, administration of the academy's finances, authorisation of any appointments or changes to terms and conditions and the approval of personnel policies and procedures
- The Governing Body has to produce a rigorous school development plan to underpin work to raise standards
- The academy's Trust has control over the land and other assets belonging to the academy

## **CURRICULUM**

- Unlike other schools, academies are not bound by the National Curriculum and are free to adopt innovative approaches to the content and delivery of the curriculum
- This freedom gives academies the opportunity to develop a curriculum to meet the needs of the individual pupils and then use this to inform designs for staffing structures and the school premises.

## **SIMILARITIES BETWEEN ACADEMIES AND MAINTAINED SCHOOLS**

### **ASSESSMENT**

- Although academies are not bound by the National Curriculum their pupils, in line with those attending maintained schools, do Key Stage assessments
- Academies offer qualifications within the national framework such as GCSE, NVQ, GNVQ, A levels etc
- Academies are inspected, as is any other school, by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED).

### **ADMISSIONS POLICIES**

- Academies are fully inclusive all ability schools. As is the case for all other maintained schools, they comply with the DCSF's Code of Practices on Admissions and Special Educational Needs and with current guidance on exclusions
- Academies are not selective schools. But, in line with maintained schools with specialist status in a particular area of the curriculum, they may opt to admit up to ten per cent of pupils each year on the basis of their aptitude for that specialism.

It is important to note that, although academies comply with the DCSF's Code of Practice on Admissions, there has been some press speculation about the impact of academies set up by faith groups on their communities which have a range of faiths. However, the evidence collected by the Race Impact Assessment for the DCSF in May 2006 suggests that academies are continuing to serve the socially diverse areas they are situated in and are not socially excluding any groups on grounds of race, ethnicity, eligibility for free school meals etc. The Race Impact Assessment report concludes that there is a need to monitor whether academies set up by faith groups have the unintended consequence of excluding some BME groups from these schools.

## ACCOUNTABILITY TO PARENTS

Academies are accountable to local parents in the same way as maintained schools, and so local people should be able to influence or help with the development of the academy once it is operational.

## ARE THE PRESENT ACADEMIES DELIVERING?

### 1. HAVE ACADEMIES IMPROVED ACADEMIC RESULTS?

- **Maybe.** The third Annual Report of the PriceWaterhouseCoopers' (PWC) Evaluation of Academies in July 2006, states that there is diversity in pupil performance between and within academies. In some academies, performance is deteriorating whilst in others performance is improving in all subjects. In some academies performance is improving in some subjects but deteriorating in others.
- **Yes, at GCSE. No at A-Level.** The National Audit Office's report, The Academies Programme (2007), states that:
  - GCSE performance in academies has improved compared with predecessor schools
  - GCSE performance in academies in 2006 was broadly similar to that in comparable schools
  - GCSE performance is improving faster in academies than in other types of school
  - taking account of both pupils' personal circumstances and prior attainment, academies' GCSE performance is substantially better, on average than other schools
  - most academies have made good progress in improving GCSE results, although overall performance in maths and English remains low despite improvements in 2006
  - Academy performance at A level is well below the national average which reflects that some academies did not focus on their sixth forms in the early years

## **2. ARE ACADEMIES SUCCESSFULLY EDUCATING DIFFICULT AND DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN?**

### **Difficult Pupils**

- The exclusion policies of some academies have been brought into question. King's and Unity City Academies in Middlesborough have together expelled 61 students since September 2002
- The National Foundation for Educational Research found that permanent exclusions were higher from academies than from non-academies
- Such exclusions appear to undermine the Government's declaration that academies are committed to educating the most difficult and disadvantaged children
- An academy is able to keep the funding for a pupil's school place after the pupil has been permanently excluded. This is not the case for non-academy schools
- A non-academy school that receives a student who has been permanently excluded by an academy receives no additional payment for the extra pupil it absorbs, thereby increasing pressure on non-academy schools

Overall, it seems to be that academies are not delivering their promises to difficult children.

### **Disadvantaged Pupils**

- The National Foundation for Educational Research found that academies on the whole admit more pupils who are eligible for free school meals, with special educational needs and with lower attainment in Key Stage 2
- The National Audit Office report found that "Academies are raising the attainment of their pupils from deprived backgrounds, for example by providing a range of vocational GCSEs alongside the academic qualifications. The focus on vocational qualifications is likely to have contributed to academies' relatively low performance when considering the

- proportions of their pupils achieving five GCSEs at A\* to C when English and maths are included”
- The DCSF Race Impact Assessment, May 2006 found that academies are educating a higher proportion of black and minority ethnic pupils, compared with the national and local averages
  - The impact that individual academies are having on groups of BME pupils varies depending on the ethnic diversity of the community around the academy. The two academies in Middlesborough have pupils from a predominantly white background. Over 50% of pupils at the Peckham Academy are from BME backgrounds and less than 25% are from white backgrounds
  - Academies are serving the socially diverse areas they are located in and are not socially excluding any groups on grounds of race, ethnicity, religion, eligibility for free school meals etc.
  - In May 2006, no data was available to indicate the performance of BME students at academies relative to other groups of pupils

Overall, it may be surmised that academies are working to promote inclusion and equality and seem to be delivering their promises to disadvantaged children

### **3. ARE ACADEMIES WORKING WITH THE WIDER COMMUNITY?**

#### **Neighbouring Schools**

- The National Audit Office reports that academies do not appear to impact unfairly on neighbouring schools
- Academies may increase competition for neighbouring schools by attracting new pupils and staff
- Currently, there is little collaboration between academies and neighbouring schools as many academies are focusing on improving their own performance before devoting time to developing links with other schools

## Parents

- The National Audit Office acknowledges that academies need to do more to engage parents.

### **4. WHAT ARE ACADEMIES DOING TO ENSURE REAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT?**

Every academy is supposed to outline plans for ensuring engagement with the local community. There are some instances of academies offering ICT and language lessons to parents but it is mostly the case that academies have not yet established close links with the community.

It is being left to individual academies to decide on what they interpret as best for the local need. There is very little evidence of linkages with Black community and voluntary groups. Much more needs to be done to ensure real community cohesion.

The National Audit Office report found that ‘there is, as yet, little collaboration between academies and neighbouring schools, except with ‘feeder’ primary schools.’ It is inevitable that academies will affect neighbouring schools because academies mostly have better reputations than their predecessor schools and are much more popular with parents.

Furthermore, community use of academy facilities is affected by VAT regulations. An academy that hires out facilities after the end of every school day, at weekends and in the school holidays is likely to exceed the VAT free limit of 10% business activity.

### **PROCESS TO SET UP AN ACADEMY**

1. Identify potential sponsors and serious sponsors **3 months**
2. Look for partners in local area and outside eg LA **3 months**
3. Contact the Office of the Schools Commissioner and the DCSF for informal discussions **2 months**

4. Sponsors and LA prepare a formal Expression of Interest for ministerial consideration 3 months
5. Agreement by Secretary of State to support the project 3 months
6. Feasibility stage:  
 Preparation of detailed plans including  
 Educational vision and model  
 Plans for school improvement  
 Outline building design  
 Formal consultation with local community  
 Preparation of core documents including a Memorandum and Articles for a new company 18 months
7. Submission of documentation to DCSF 3 months
8. Formal consultation by Secretary of State with Local Authority in which Academy is to be based and any neighbouring Local Authorities that might be affected by Academy 6 months
9. Signing of Funding Agreement by Academy Trust and Secretary of State 3 months
- 10 Building works 18 months

**TOTAL**

**4 YEARS 8 MONTHS**

11 Opening of Academy

## **FACTS AND FIGURES**

- 46 academies are now open of which 23 are in London
- The 46 academies include 5 former city technology colleges and 5 totally new schools with a phased intake of pupils

- Over 30 academies are planned to open in each of the next 3 years. This will total about 150 by 2009
- The total capital cost for 200 academies will be around £5 billion
- Up to 2007 the total expenditure for the academies programme was £840 mills for capital costs, £463 mills for revenue costs and £11 mills for management costs. This totals £1.314 mills.
- All academies incur some initial capital costs.
- The DCSF will provide academies with funding for running costs that is equivalent to that provided for maintained schools in similar circumstances