



a new direction

a review of the school
academies programme

acknowledgments

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foreword

The Academies programme has been a centrepiece of the ongoing reform of secondary schools in recent years.

Few doubt the Government's commitment to improving educational achievement and tackling poverty in our most disadvantaged communities and there have undoubtedly been major achievements and an increase in attainment.

However, a wide range of stakeholders have legitimately challenged whether the expenditure on the Academies programme is the best means of achieving the Government's aim of tackling the legacy of educational underachievement that continues to blight too many of our communities.

Questions of accountability, in particular the disproportionate influence of sponsoring bodies and the weakening of the remit of local authorities, have led to concerns that the Academies programme is undermining the cohesion of state education.

The decision to rapidly expand the programme at such an early stage has also called into question the Government's supposed commitment to an evidence-based policy approach.

Trade unions in particular have been quite rightly concerned about the potential negative impact of the 'Academy model' on the terms and conditions of teaching and support staff in these schools.

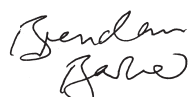
This research report was commissioned by the TUC following a motion to Congress 2006 highlighting concerns about the increasing marketisation of education and the role of Academies in this respect.

Interestingly, the research has been undertaken during a period when the Government has been taking forward some changes to the initiative, including enabling some local authorities to integrate Academies into their overall strategy for education in their localities.

There is now a real opportunity to take stock of the Academies programme and the range of related educational initiatives that currently make up secondary school provision and to set out a new direction supported by all major stakeholders.

This report sets out a way forward which tackles the controversial and divisive aspects of the Academies programme without abandoning the basic concept of a radical solution to the challenges.

I believe that building a new strategy along these lines would accelerate progress in improving educational achievement among all our young people, particularly the most disadvantaged.



Brendan Barber, TUC General Secretary

summary

- 1 The Academies programme has been a highly controversial part of the Government's education policy since its announcement by the then Education Secretary, David Blunkett, in March 2000. The Academies initiative was described at its launch as a "radical new approach", and it provoked immediate and widespread opposition. The subsequent 'debate' has become a high-stakes contest, characterised by claim and counter-claim, often with inadequate regard to hard data.
- 2 There has been a constant stream of publications describing the development of the programme in some detail, charting its origins and progress, contributing to the debate about its effectiveness, and sometimes adding to the controversy. These include the evaluations of the programme by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), a recent report by the National Audit Office (NAO), several contributions from the school workforce unions and innumerable articles in the national and educational press (the main sources of information used are listed in Section 8).
- 3 The purpose of this report, commissioned by the TUC, is not to summarise or replicate those contributions, but to build on them and to try and establish what is really going on now, in mid 2007. And more importantly, the report attempts to distil all the evidence to date in order to provide a framework for forging a new direction for the programme that would lead to a more positive engagement by all stakeholders and a more equitable distribution of the educational benefits for disadvantaged communities in particular.
- 4 And there have been a number of recent developments and changes to the 'Academy model' which do offer opportunities to build a new strategy along these lines. In a number of parts of the country, local authorities are now being enabled to integrate Academies into their overall strategy for secondary school provision within their locality. In addition, relatively recent changes to the model funding agreement governing the activities of Academies means that they are increasingly having to meet core national standards required of community schools.
- 5 However, in spite of these welcome developments, there remain challenges in building a new consensus for a reform of the Academies programme that would achieve genuine support from all parties. A key finding of the report is that the programme itself, and the context within which it operates, have changed so significantly since its launch that there is an overriding need to review and evaluate the current situation.
- 6 For example, the original aim of Academies simply "to replace seriously failing schools" has been overtaken by a new policy approach which extends well beyond this and which appears to have taken on a life of its own. Little

summary

or no mention is made of the fact that during the period between 2004 (when the target of 200 Academies by 2010 was announced) and 2006 (when it was doubled to 400) the actual number of secondary schools in special measures halved, from 97 to 48.

- 7 The original aim of the research programme agreed with the TUC and affiliated unions earlier this year was to set out: an overview of the background to the programme; an account of the development of Government thinking and practice; an assessment of the findings of the most recent evaluations of the Academies programme and of Academies' effect on other institutions; some idea of how Academies themselves see the situation; a look at how local authorities appear to be responding to the programme; and, some thoughts about future developments.
- 8 It was however very difficult to find evidence of the impact of Academies on neighbouring schools (it is probably too early) and equally difficult to obtain information from Academies themselves. However, a wide range of other sources for information was trawled, including local authorities and the Academies Division of the DfES, and we have tried to use these sources to distil the facts rather than relying on speculation or opinion.
- 9 The report begins by providing a succinct account of the key developments that have marked the growth of the Academies programme to date. It then examines the crucial role played by sponsors, in particular highlighting the significant implications of the changing role of local authorities in some part of the country. Following this the report analyses the available research evidence relating to the impact of Academies against the key performance objectives set by the DfES.
- 10 Above all, the report concludes that there is no longer enough clarity about the Government's overall strategy for improving secondary provision, especially the basis on which the Academies programme sits alongside other existing initiatives, and that this should be rectified as a matter of some urgency. This will become increasingly important as additional policy initiatives come into play over the coming years, especially the roll-out of the 14–19 diplomas, the introduction of the new school admissions code and raising of the participation age to 18.
- 11 This report attempts to lay the groundwork for such a review, which would ultimately help the Government to work with all its partners in order to develop uniformly high quality secondary provision for all young people, but with a particular focus on raising aspiration and educational achievement amongst our most disadvantaged communities.
- 12 The main recommendations set out below offer a 'route-map' for developing a wider dialogue on building a new direction for secondary school provision that would support, and build on, the Government's achievements to date.

Key recommendations

The Government should:

- establish an independent panel of experts to review each element of the Government's school improvement approach, including the Academies programme
- in light of this review, restate and clarify the overall approach to school improvement
- reform key features of the Academies programme, especially accountability issues and the role of sponsors
- continue the trend towards greater local authority involvement, including sponsorship, and work towards reintegrating Academies within the local authority family of schools
- work with the school workforce unions to entitle unions to the same recognition rights as in other schools and also to protect pay and conditions in Academies.

section one

a short history of the academies programme

The vision

- 13 The Academies programme is part of the Government's response to educational underperformance in deprived areas. It was launched in March 2000 as "a radical approach" to promoting greater diversity and breaking the cycle of failure in inner city schools in particular. The concept of the Academy draws on the development of Charter Schools in the United States in the 1980s and 90s as a way to promote innovation and diversity in the educational system and tackle underachievement. In England the launch of the Academies policy was announced by (then) Secretary of State, David Blunkett, in a speech and booklet for the Social Market Foundation (SMF) on 15 March 2000¹, as follows:

"This booklet sets out my vision for secondary education. It builds on the speech I made at the North of England Conference in January... in some of the most challenging areas, we believe a more radical approach is needed. Over the next year, we intend to launch pathfinder projects for new City Academies. These Academies, to replace seriously failing schools, will be built and managed by partnerships involving the Government, voluntary, church, and business sponsors. They will offer a real challenge and improvements in pupil performance, for example through innovative approaches to management, governance, teaching and the curriculum, including a specialist focus in at least one curriculum area. They will also be committed to working with and learning from other local schools... The aim will be to raise standards by breaking the cycle of underperformance and low expectations. To be eligible for Government support, the Academies will need to meet clear criteria. They will take over or replace schools which are either in special measures or underachieving..."

- 14 The Department's accompanying press notice (DfES press release 2000/0106, 15 March 2000) said: "The new approach will bring a radical new edge to the Fresh Start initiative – strengthening the programme designed to turn failure into school improvement."

- 15 In addition to Academies and Fresh Start, other key schools policies introduced since Labour's 1997 election victory included: Excellence in Cities; Education Action Zones; the London Challenge (now being rolled out across further cities); a major expansion of the specialist schools initiative; the possibility of new Foundation or Voluntary Aided schools supported by foundations set up by the private, church or voluntary sectors (the precursor of 'trust schools'); and, allowing existing private schools to join the state sector.

¹ <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/speeches>

The underpinning principles

- 16 The statutory basis for Academies was the existing legislative powers from the Education Reform Act 1988 to establish City Technology Colleges (CTCs), subsequently amended. In fact, the amendment to the Education and Skills Bill 2000 which paved the way for City Academies was not introduced until 27 June, after the Bill had passed through the House of Lords and towards the end of the Commons Committee stage – an unusual way to introduce a major initiative.
- 17 The Prospectus produced by the Department in 2000 for sponsors and other partners, quoted the following short passage from David Blunkett’s SMF speech inside its front cover: “City Academies, to replace seriously failing schools, will be established by partnerships involving the Government, the voluntary sector, church and business sponsors. They will offer a real change. The aim will be to raise standards by breaking the cycle of under-performance and low expectations.”
- 18 In his foreword to the Prospectus, David Blunkett wrote, “Poorly performing schools reinforce inequality and disadvantage. Many in local authorities, the business community, and in the churches and voluntary sector, as well as the schools themselves, share our determination to bring equality of opportunity to all our children. City Academies are one way that they can help achieve this goal. The Academies will not bring overnight success. They will involve hard work and gradual improvement, but we believe they have the potential to make a major contribution to improving opportunities for all our children.”
- 19 The Prospectus said City Academies would provide:
- Schools at the heart of their communities, sharing their facilities with other schools and the wider communities
 - Promoters making a contribution towards capital costs in the order of 20 per cent; for a new school this might require a contribution of £2million.
- 20 In spite of the focus on engagement with the wider community, Academies have been criticised, in particular, for failing to share facilities. However, there has been a specific problem arising from VAT regulations which put constraints on Academies letting out their facilities when charges are made. The VAT issue was addressed in the 2006 Budget with a view to removing this financial disincentive to sharing of facilities and the obstacle was finally removed in the 2007 Budget announcement.
- 21 Sponsors’ contributions seldom covered anything like 20 per cent of the cost of the new buildings which usually characterised the programme, and often haven’t been anything like £2 million. In addition, as the TES has reported in two articles (07.10.05 and 04.08.06), none of the Academies opened by September 2006 had actually replaced a school in special measures (the official designation of a ‘failing school’) at the time of its closure.
- 22 This raises the question of how far the improvements achieved were the result of the new Academy status and how far they arose from the

interventions already put in place by the local authority. A recent report from the National Audit Office² shows that in general there was a fairly steady rise in percentage of pupils achieving 5 GCSEs at A–C grades both before and after schools changed to become Academies. The exception to this was that there was a better rate of improvement in GCSE results during the year immediately after a school became an Academy. However, after this brief jump in results, the NAO chart shows that there is a return to a more gradual rate of improvement and that the combined rate of increase was greater in the two years before predecessor schools became Academies than in the combined second and third years of them operating as Academies.

Implementing and expanding the programme

- 23 The first three Academies opened in 2002; a further nine in 2003; five in 2004; 10 in 2005; and 19 in 2006. In June 2004 the Government announced a new target of 200 Academies “open or in the pipeline” by 2010, 60 of which would be London. There are 47 Academies open to date, a further 40 are due to open this year, and details of 41 more appear in the DfES’s April 2007 ‘state of play’ spreadsheet for opening in the next couple of years, making a total of 128 Academies open by the end of 2009 (information from the DfES ‘state of play’ spreadsheet on Academies open and in planning stages can be found on the CSN website, www.csn.info).
- 24 The DfES have said that there are other Academies being planned which do not appear on this spreadsheet as they had not yet reached the feasibility stage. Also, the NAO report (section 1.10) gives a much higher figure than the April spreadsheet, stating that there “were 170 planned Academies which had reached different stages at September 2006”.
- 25 Although the NAO report indicates that the Department is on course to achieve its target of 200 Academies open or developed by 2010, it also states that this will depend on the Department maintaining its existing completion rate of Academy projects or starting sufficient new projects to replace those that are not completed.
- 26 In a speech to the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust Conference in November 2006, the Prime Minister announced a doubling of the target to 400 (but with no specific reference to the timescale). In the meantime, a number of developments had led to, or at least been followed by, some significant changes to the programme.

Changes to the ‘Academy model’

- 27 In February 2003, the DfES commissioned PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) to conduct an independent, five-year evaluation of the Academies initiative. PwC has produced three annual reports for the Department, all now published (the fourth is presumably with the DfES awaiting publication). It was in its response to the third report, published alongside the report in July 2006, that the DfES announced that sponsors’ contributions would no longer be used towards the cost of the building.

² *The Academies Programme*, National Audit Office, February 2007 (figure 5)

a short history of the academies programme

- 28 The backdrop to the introduction of this flexibility was a previously announced change, in March 2006, that in future new Academies would be delivered under the management of Partnerships for Schools (PfS), bringing them into line with the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) initiative.³ Instead of going towards building costs, sponsors' contributions would instead be used to establish a charitable investment fund, the income from which would be used "to counter the educational impact of disadvantage and deprivation and/or for educational work within the local community". This new flexibility undermined a hitherto frequently repeated observation from the DfES that Academies' revenue funding was the same as that for other local secondary schools.
- 29 The BSF initiative is likely to impact in various ways on the future development of the Academies programme and this will be explored further below. However, it is worth noting here that although putting the building of Academies under PfS is likely to produce savings on Academy buildings, the NAO report (para 1.12) warns that "cost overruns could affect the availability of funds that will be needed to achieve the target of 200 Academies". There is no doubt that the NAO sees the Academies programme as a challenging one. It notes that the DfES has been under pressure to buy in expertise in project management and educational improvement to manage and deliver the programme and this is likely to continue as long as the targets are in place (NAO Report, Summary, para 13).
- 30 Using the Freedom of Information Act, CSN (then known as TEN) obtained the previously confidential Funding Agreements for the Academies – which are now routinely published by the DfES on its Freedom of Information website. These provided a lot of hitherto unknown information about such matters as Academies' policies on admissions, discipline and appeals procedures, and other matters.
- 31 Disquiet had been growing about a number of areas in which pupils' and parents' rights were clearly diminished by the fact that Academies are independent schools. Law firms (in particular Matrix Chambers) used the Funding Agreements to identify a raft of issues over which, despite being state schools, some Academies' policies and practices were significantly different from those required of (local authority) maintained schools by education law.
- 32 CSN drew attention to one such issue, the admission (or potential non-admission) of pupils with special educational needs (SEN), to members of the House of Commons Education Select Committee. The concerns of Committee members, expressed in two separate enquiries, have been followed by a significant change in the DfES's approach on SEN matters, though the position still falls short of that in maintained schools.
- 33 A new 'model' Funding Agreement now replicates far more closely the position of maintained schools. Also, rather than simply being the starting point for individual Academies' Funding Agreements, it is apparently now seldom varied in respect of significant issues. There can be little doubt that

³ In 2003 the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) initiative was announced, under which the entire secondary school estate would be rebuilt or renovated, to bring schools up to a standard fit for the 21st Century.

the combination of identifying the anomalies and the subsequent adverse publicity through media coverage has led to these changes.

34 However, it remains the case that, should an Academy act in contravention of its Funding Agreement to the detriment of a pupil or parent, there is no remedy in law (as there would be for a maintained school). Instead parents must rely on a direction from the Secretary of State to rectify the situation.

35 Probably the most significant change to the ‘Academy model’ has been around the role of sponsors and in particular the move towards an increased role for local authorities. This has led to a number of approaches across the country where the establishment of Academies have been more integrated into the wider strategies of local authorities for secondary school provision in their locality. This issue is addressed in more detail in the following section of this report.

Conclusion

36 The early period of extravagant, albeit spectacular, buildings – some designed by prominent architects, but some criticised as being less than fully fit for purpose – is clearly over. Local authorities are not only more closely involved as managers of the process of delivering Academy buildings, they are more involved (many under pressure verging on duress) in incorporating Academies into their planned pattern of provision of schooling as described in their ‘Strategy for Change’ which is part of the BSF process. Indeed, as described in the next section of this report, they are increasingly involved as sponsors in what appears to be a relatively significant change in the overall pattern of sponsorship and development of the whole Academies programme.

37 Looking back at David Blunkett’s original announcement, it is clear that seven years on the programme is quite different from the vision he originally described. Indeed, since the announcement in 2004 of the 200 target (since doubled), there is a distinct impression of a different underlying agenda. It otherwise makes little sense to greatly expand a programme intended to reverse chronic and persistent failure over the same period that the number of schools judged to require such intervention has fallen significantly, and now lies little above one-tenth of the new target of 400 Academies⁴.

⁴ Data on the Ofsted website show that in April 2004 there were 97 secondary schools in special measures, and that this had fallen to 48 by December 2006.

section two

sponsors and the changing role of local authorities

- 38 The issues around Academies being innovative and acting as centres of excellence relates also to the role of Academy sponsors. The Government believes sponsors help to bring leadership and innovation to Academies. Yet some sponsors have already expressed frustration at being expected to innovate and yet still be part of a local education system. This raises the question of whether private sponsors can be relied on to deliver a service which fits into the LA system.
- 39 Where sponsors seem content to fit in with local systems it is easy for the LA to work alongside them and also to act as sponsors. However, the PwC report notes that the sponsors that are involved in a number of Academies may see less need to collaborate with other local schools. On the other hand, United Learning Trust (ULT), which is currently the sponsor of the largest number of Academies (12 – including nine which are open) runs them as a group and supports them with policies and professional development much like an LA. It also sees its mission to support the local community and schools. However there is no guarantee that other sponsors will view this as high on their agenda whatever is stated in an Academy school prospectus or in its Funding Agreement.

Changes to the role of sponsors and local authorities

- 40 In early 2006 the DfES published a new guide for sponsors, *Establishing an Academy, an Overview for Sponsors*⁵ (alongside another publication – *Delivering Academy Buildings Through PfS* – providing guidelines for sponsors on the implications of integrating Academies within BSF). In stark contrast to the original Prospectus, the new guide was positively thick with references to the role of the local authority (LA). Most significantly perhaps, the new guide stated: “The LA will manage the delivery of the Academy buildings and the Sponsor will steer the design process, as part of a Design Group which the LA will establish, to build on the Academy vision and ethos set out in the Expression of Interest (EoI)”.
- 41 The first introductory paragraph of the guide also clearly indicates that new buildings may not be an early option, as follows: “The establishment of an Academy and its opening in new or refurbished buildings take place independently of one another. Although an improved environment is important to the delivery of an Academy’s ethos in the longer term, an early opening in existing buildings helps to deliver the benefits of the new curriculum, teaching and learning to the community as quickly as possible.”

⁵ This particular guide is no longer available on the DfES Academies site and it has been superseded by the new prospectus published in May 2006 (see Paragraph 42 above)

- 42 In May 2007 the DfES published another new prospectus, *400 Academies: Prospectus for Sponsors and Local Authorities*, which appeared alongside a 64-page glossy publication, *Better Buildings, Better Design, Better Education*. This Prospectus states at the beginning that “The Government is firmly committed to establishing 400 Academies” and concludes with a reference to the provision made in this year’s Comprehensive Spending Review, which “allows the Department to continue to make good progress in rolling out the Academies programme”.
- 43 The Prospectus includes many of the assertions about Academies that have been made elsewhere, but it does also further illustrate the increasing role being given to local authorities. For example, local authorities are given prominence in the title of the Prospectus and it also describes Academies as “in effect, jointly commissioned by the DfES and the relevant local authority on a partnership basis”. In the Prospectus the DfES says that whilst “Academies are not ‘maintained’ by the local authority in the traditional manner, [they] are nonetheless part of the wider family of schools and other educational institutions in their area and we strongly encourage appropriate collaboration”.
- 44 This new Prospectus highlights local authorities where Academies are playing a major part in the LA’s secondary provision and where they comprise a large proportion of secondary schools (e.g. Hackney and Southwark are two examples). The Prospectus also highlights the development of the so-called ‘Manchester model’ based on a recent agreement brokered between the DfES and Manchester City Council that will lead to the development of eight Academies in the city, six geared to specific employment generation priorities for the city, with sponsors secured by the Council from each of these sectors.
- 45 There are also other cases where local authorities are playing a major role in using Academies within their existing education strategies in a distinctive manner, for example, in the north east of England with the ‘Sunderland model’. As in Manchester, Sunderland City Council is playing a key role in planning the rollout of three Academies across the City and is also coordinating the input of external sponsors. A recent article in the *Financial Times*⁶ has highlighted the ‘Sunderland model’ and the fact that approaches of this kind represent a growing trend among local authorities.
- 46 However, this trend does not take away from the fact that there remain major concerns about the impact of the Academies programme on the strategic role of local education authorities in respect of secondary school provision. This was highlighted recently by Sir Jeremy Beecham of the Local Government Association, when he stated that “the concern is that, in return for a very modest investment, control of a public asset, which continues to be publicly funded, passes in perpetuity and with minimal accountability to private individuals or institutions, albeit of a philanthropic bent.”⁷

⁶ “Councils Become Education Sponsors”, *Financial Times*, 20/6/2007

⁷ Letter in the Education section of *The Guardian*, 26/7/2007

A change of view by government?

- 47 As highlighted above, a number of local authorities have begun to have some success in working more closely with the Academies Division of the DfES and with sponsors in setting up Academies. Earlier there was less willingness by central Government to see the involvement of local authorities in a positive light, for example in the selection of the sponsor and the development of the funding agreements for the Academies. Indeed, there was a tendency for Government to see LA influence as likely to inhibit the new approaches being developed by Academies, and instead to look to the sponsors and the project leaders appointed by the DfES to develop these.
- 48 Although this did not fit well with the Government's intention that Academies should from the outset co-operate with and influence other local schools and communities, it was in line with the expectation that Academies would be leading local innovation and would be using their new freedoms to be different from LA maintained schools. More recently the DfES appears to have softened its views and recognised the benefits of closer co-operation with local authorities and even of their involvement as sponsors.
- 49 Many of the responses from local authorities to surveys undertaken by CSN about their experience of working with the DfES and sponsors are positive about these improved relationships and the way the local authority can help influence the setting up and development of Academies. However, it must be said that there appears to be little actual enthusiasm for Academies for reasons other than financial.
- 50 Also, the picture varies and some local authorities have experienced a lack of trust by the DfES in what they can contribute, sometimes even when the sponsors stay positive. There seems to be considerable variability in the approaches and expectations of the consultants employed by the DfES Academies Division to set up the local Academy projects and this impacts on the level of involvement that local authorities can achieve.

Strengthening local and national policies

- 51 The funding agreements for Academies include arrangements on areas such as admissions, exclusions and special educational needs provision. The responses from local authorities indicate that many are now able to negotiate agreements on admissions and exclusions and also on hard to place pupils which are in line with the locally agreed policies (and national policies) operating for other local schools.
- 52 This softer approach by the DfES may in part be due to the Government's commitment to open more Academies across England and the challenges this presents. Sponsors too may have preferred to have the security of advice from local authorities about what procedures work well, especially given the strong criticisms in the national and local press about the motives of some sponsors and also their lack of educational expertise. Whatever the reasons, the changes made by the DfES in 2006 to the original model funding agreement have meant that policies and procedures for Academies since that

date are more likely to be in line with those of other local community or controlled schools.

An increasing trend

- 53 As highlighted above, in a growing number of cases local authorities have chosen to become sponsors. For many, this appears to be a way of gaining new school buildings and having more control over the choice of the other sponsor/s as well as helping to ensure that what is set up fits better with local plans and school policies, in particular with developments around 14–19 curriculum reforms.
- 54 According to the April 2007 DfES spreadsheet there are seven local authorities which are sponsoring Academies: Kent County Council is sponsoring five out of the nine in its area; Sunderland is sponsoring all three in its area; the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, Coventry, and Telford and Wrekin are each sponsoring the only Academy in their areas; the Corporation of London is sponsoring three Academies in three London Boroughs (Hackney, Southwark and Islington); and Manchester is sponsoring six of the eight Academies proposed for the city. In all, the DfES spreadsheet lists 19 Academies where local authorities are also playing a role as sponsors. There may be others under discussion, but these are not shown on the spreadsheet.

section three

workforce issues

- 55 When the Academy model was launched (based on the City Technology College model) it was envisaged that flexibility over staff pay and conditions (rather than being bound by national and local agreements) would enable Academies to introduce innovative approaches to the timetable and curriculum. The impact of the development of the Academies programme on the terms and conditions of the workforce in these schools is difficult to disentangle, not least because it is proving difficult to acquire comprehensive information on this particular issue.
- 56 In addition, the impact is multifaceted and complex due to the inter-related impact of the Transfer of Undertaking (Protection of Employment) regulations, commonly referred to as TUPE. When Academies replace existing schools, existing staff are transferred with protected terms and conditions under TUPE, leading to many Academies having a sizeable percentage of their staff in this situation.
- 57 But over time, in those Academies which are deviating from nationally agreed arrangements (and it should be noted that many continue to adhere to them), this situation will change as protected staff leave and new staff are possibly appointed on less favourable terms and conditions than the workforce in maintained schools. In effect, this means that this issue could become increasingly important over time and the school workforce unions in particular have highlighted the potentially damaging effect of this on the morale and commitment of the workforce in the reports they have published on the Academies programme (see Section 8 for a list of these publications).
- Findings on pay and working time**
- 58 As Academies need to compete with other schools for staff it is unlikely that the rates of pay for new teachers will vary much from what is expected from the national agreements. Indeed, when competition bites it is possible that Academies will need to pay more to attract staff. Ofsted has reported difficulties in a number of Academies of high levels of staff turnover and some have needed to recruit large numbers of newly qualified staff.
- 59 The NAO report also notes that some Academies have found it hard to retain staff and that where they have recruited and trained good teachers they have found them leaving to take up higher posts in other schools (para 2.35 NAO). The emphasis on the importance of strong leadership in Academies has also pushed up salaries for principals – the NAO report indicates that principals are earning between £18,000 and £32,000 more than local authority head teachers (para 3.42 NAO).

60 Some Academies are reportedly operating a longer school day, with only short breaks for staff and pupils. Given the lack of data from staff working in Academies it is hard to know whether they are expected to work longer hours than normal but anecdotal evidence points in this direction. And the reports on Academies by the school workforce unions have certainly highlighted that one of the most common variations of pay and conditions is to lengthen the working year, lengthen the working day, or both.

Limited survey data

61 It is difficult to give any general picture of current trends in Academies regarding staffing levels and relations between staff and management/sponsors. There is a huge diversity in the way that Academies can deal with these issues and no such information is collected at national level. In addition, it has proved very difficult to acquire information directly from Academies on levels of staffing, pay and conditions of new staff, and staff/management relations.

62 CSN contacted all 46 open Academies in January 2007 and asked principals and staff representatives for information on these areas, but responses were received from only eight Academies. This may suggest that staff feel inhibited from providing information about these internal matters and relations with management, so making any external evaluation of these changes difficult. It also suggests that PwC, the official evaluators, should use their contact with Academies to gather more detailed information on these areas and provide more substantial analysis of these areas than has been the case hitherto.

63 As responses were received from only eight Academies, the comments made by staff can only be used to suggest some of the trends and to illustrate the perceptions of some staff employed in them. When asked to comment on the experience of working in Academies, staff highlighted that some of the main advantages were the new buildings with good ICT facilities. They said that this helped lift staff and pupils' morale and sense of being valued. Some said that this had helped to motivate pupils and their learning. These responses echo those of staff captured in the PwC surveys. But as more secondary schools acquire new buildings or are refurbished through BSF this benefit will be less exclusive to Academies.

A lack of collective voice?

64 However, when Academy staff were asked whether they had experienced more or less involvement in decision-making, in five of the eight Academies responding staff reported having less influence. This perception may arise from the way staff see strategic decisions being taken by the principal in discussion with the sponsor and also by the governing body on which staff have little or no representation.

65 Academies are not required to appoint any elected teacher or staff representatives to their governing body and although many do, often there is only one or two staff representatives on a governing body of 15 or more, of

which most are appointed by the sponsor. This clearly sends a message to staff that their views are not regarded as key in shaping the strategic goals and ways of working of the institution and they may not be getting feedback either about what is being discussed and decided.

- 66 As Academies operate outside the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD) and the Burgundy Book (i.e. the national conditions of service for school teachers in England and Wales), unions representing teachers and support staff have to negotiate relationships with Academies mainly on a school-by-school basis. In the small return from our survey, staff from four out of eight Academies responding indicated that there had been progress on getting agreements discussed. However, in the other four there seemed to have been no progress on this.
- 67 The creation of consortia of sponsors, such as the United Learning Trust, which is involved with setting up a number of Academies, has appeared to facilitate union negotiation. At a national level, ULT has concluded a joint recognition agreement with a whole range of unions. However, this is more of an isolated case and the school workforce unions are having to expend resources on trying to achieve recognition in what is a highly fragmented and unregulated body of schools in order to establish collective bargaining arrangements.
- 68 How future relationships will develop between Academies and unions is not yet clear, and currently there is still much concern among the unions at national and local level about the potential threat of Academies to staff pay and conditions as well as their lack of local accountability.
- 69 Trade unions are also concerned at the way Academies are seen as increasing (if not leading) the privatisation of the public education system and this report was commissioned as a result of a motion to TUC Congress 2006 focused on this policy issue.⁸ Linked to this there are also concerns among many teachers that some sponsors may try to influence the curriculum and even where there is no evidence of this happening there is the fear that it could happen over time. For example, one of the staff responding to the CSN survey wrote "no attempt – yet".

Conclusion

- 70 One means of addressing wide-ranging concerns in this particular area and of ensuring that the workforce has an equivalent collective voice in Academies would be for the Government to insist that all the school workforce unions had a similar right to recognition in Academies as they have in the maintained sector. Following on from this it would make sense to ensure that stronger safeguards are put in place to ensure that the flexibilities given to Academies on workforce issues are not used by them to undermine the current national framework for pay and conditions which applies to the majority of the workforce in maintained schools.

⁸ TUC Congress 2006, Composite Motion 10, "Education and Inspections Bill and Marketisation of Education" (full text at: www.tuc.org.uk/congress/tuc-12477-f0.cfm)

section four

assessing the impact of academies

- 71 This section of the report looks at the evidence to date on the impact of Academies against the six objectives established by the DfES in the early stages of the programme. However, it is important to note that there is a major problem making meaningful comparisons between Academies and other schools, arising from the selection of an appropriate comparator group. Comparing them with national averages is plainly ridiculous (though not uncommon).
- 72 However, even attempts to construct groups of ‘similar’ schools omit key characteristics. For example, whilst levels of free school meal entitlement and other data may be similar, some account should also be taken of other significant factors, including: replacing the management team; moving into new buildings; and, even the impact of the political and media attention and coverage surrounding the programme.
- 73 Apart from the original overarching purpose of the programme, described by David Blunkett at its launch, the DfES set specific objectives, described in PwC’s second report:
- Objective 1: To add greater value in terms of performance against national trends compared with schools with similar characteristics at Key Stage 3, GCSE and A level within two years of opening in terms of value-added and in gross achievement terms.
 - Objective 2: To raise achievement rates of pupils to at least national averages at Key Stage 3, GCSE and A level within four years of opening, and raise the achievement rates of groups which currently under-achieve and pupils with special educational needs.
 - Objective 3: To help raise achievement rates of pupils in other local schools, including feeder primary schools, by sharing facilities and expertise within four years of opening.
 - Objective 4: To increase the proportion of pupils who stay in education after compulsory school age and enter further or higher education after sixth form studies (where appropriate).
 - Objective 5: To increase attendance by reducing authorised and unauthorised absences and decrease permanent exclusion levels compared to schools with similar characteristics within two years of opening.
 - Objective 6: To be regarded as centres of excellence in their specialism(s).

74 These objectives were very ambitious and the short timescales also appeared very unrealistic (and have indeed proved to be so). The third PwC evaluation stresses that Academies vary greatly in the extent to which they are achieving many of these objectives. On pupil performance PwC highlights the “diversity in performance both between and within Academies” as one of the most important findings to emerge from the evaluation so far. They argue that this is not surprising given that Academies represent a very diverse group of institutions that have different specialisms and cultures and are led and governed in different ways. While this explains the differences, it also begs the question of whether there is an Academies model as such that is likely to work more effectively than any other secondary schools that operate with good leadership and supportive and challenging governors and local authorities.

75 This mixed picture about the performance of Academies is also echoed by the 2005–06 Annual Report of Ofsted, which found that progress made by the nine Academies visited was “broadly positive but was uneven”. The Ofsted report also states that Academies are “one possible response to the challenge of raising and sustaining standards of education”. The basic ingredients of school improvement are now widely agreed. They include strong leadership, close parental involvement and high quality teaching. These are not contingent on a school being of a particular category or type.

76 Some of the data analysed by PwC in relation to the six objectives is summarised below along with data from the NAO report and elsewhere.

Objectives 1 and 2: Adding value and raising performance

77 The problem of finding suitable comparator schools means that much of what has so far appeared about how far Academies are meeting the programme’s first two objectives is of dubious value. However, it is safe to say that few Academies are meeting the timescale.

78 Such difficulties in assessing the performance of Academies echo those surrounding the performance of Charter Schools in the USA. The Charter Schools are far more numerous compared to Academies (there are around 3,400 such schools in existence across the US) so there has been more data available over a longer period to assess them against other schools. Nevertheless, the problem has been that, just as with Academies, there is great diversity in the way these schools operate and in the way that they have been assessed and compared to other schools.

79 The analysis of data about the performance of Charter Schools is not straightforward, but a National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) report in 2004 found that there was “no measurable difference” in reading scores between Charter Schools and other public schools and that overall maths scores were lower in Charter Schools. However, certain minority groups performed better, in particular Black and Hispanic pupils. Other studies have reported a variety of findings and the variable methodologies used makes comparisons difficult .⁹

⁹ The Catalyst report for NASUWT includes a chapter on Charter Schools in the USA

80 The evaluation of Academies to date on meeting objectives 1 and 2 can be summarised as follows:

- **GCSE performance** – Table 6 in the NAO report shows that for three main measures of GCSE performance (five or more grades A* to C, grades A* to G, and grades A* to C including English and Maths) in 2006, Academy pupils gained on average better results than Fresh Start schools but not as good as those of Excellence in Cities (EiC) schools in deprived areas. The performance of Academy pupils in the third category of GCSE performance (which includes Maths and English), was 22 per cent compared to 29 per cent of EiC pupils and 45 per cent of secondary pupils nationally.
- **KS3** – The NAO report shows that at Key Stage 3, pupils at Academies performed less well in English (52 per cent), Maths (53 per cent) and Science (42 per cent) compared to EiC pupils in deprived areas (62 per cent, 61 per cent and 54 per cent respectively).
- **A levels** – The NAO report indicates that performance at A level has been poor so far (para 2.18) and that sixth forms in Academies are still small (see also Paragraph 94 below).

Objective 3: Supporting achievement in other local schools and sharing facilities and expertise within 4 years of opening

81 PwC found that there was “a mixed picture in relation to perceptions around Academies” links with other local schools’. Their staff survey in 2004/5 found that less than 50 per cent of staff in Academies thought that the school had proactively supported other schools by sharing resources and expertise. There were similar findings in their 2005/6 survey of staff and this also showed that only 39 per cent of staff had participated in LA activities on a regular basis.

82 In addition, 18 per cent of Academy staff thought Academies had proactively recruited good students from neighbouring schools and 16 per cent of staff thought that Academies had generally had a negative impact on neighbouring schools’ enrolments (PwC 2006 p 49). The 2006 PwC evaluation emphasises that it is still early days to expect recently established Academies to turn outwards to support other schools. They expect that after 2 to 3 years Academies will be better placed to support other schools but the danger is that political pressure on Academies to be seen to perform better than other schools is likely to place local collaboration lower down their list of priorities.

83 The same PwC evaluation also found that where Academies were local and autonomous, and not part of a larger group with the same sponsor with collective governance arrangements, there was more impetus to reach out to the wider community and make contact with local schools and engage in local authority organised training and meetings. While 53 per cent of staff in the former group thought their Academy was proactively supporting schools, only 35 per cent of staff in the latter group did so. Interestingly, far more of the

latter group thought their Academy had a negative impact on other local schools. This suggests that Academies run collectively as a group are more likely to feel more self-sufficient and to present more of a threat to the intakes of other local schools. This implies that the DfES needs to consider more carefully the possible negative outcomes of different governance arrangements.

- 84 The NAO report also found very little evidence of collaboration between Academies and neighbouring secondary schools. It found Academies focusing mainly on local primary schools in their area. This may imply more enthusiasm for ensuring a good intake of pupils to the Academy than for supporting other local secondary schools. In order to push collaboration up Academies' agendas the NAO recommends that the DfES ask Academies in their second and third years to produce proposals for collaboration with local schools.
- 85 The accuracy of evidence about local collaboration and sharing of facilities with other schools also seems patchy and contradictory at times. While PwC (para 5.15) stated that Academies with sports and IT specialisms tended to share their facilities more readily with local schools than those with other specialisms, the NAO survey (para 2.13) found no local schools who reported using the sports facilities of their local Academy. This situation is a long way from the original vision painted in the DfES Prospectus for sponsors in 2000 that Academies would be "schools at the heart of their communities".
- 86 Where evidence of collaboration between local schools and Academies is available it appears to most commonly involve meetings between senior managers, although NAO found that fewer than half of neighbouring schools reported that they had had such meetings. NAO also found that less than five per cent of local schools had had Academy staff teach at their school. It is striking that even joint working with Academies on sixth form provision was reported by less than 10 per cent of local schools (see more on this below).
- 87 Responses from sponsors and principals to the CSN survey, although few in number, indicate that although co-operation with other schools is on their agenda it appears to be more of a future aim than a present reality. This cuts across the Government's agenda to encourage school partnerships around improving behaviour, delivering the Every Child Matters agenda, providing services across the community to children and families via the extended schools programme and providing increased collaboration on 14–19 education and training.
- 88 One major reason identified for Academies not opening up their facilities more often to the local community is that if they charged for their use they would be liable to pay full rate VAT on the entire construction cost of the Academy. This impediment was said to be tied into European tax regulations and therefore unavoidable, but now ways have been found to avoid the VAT and these were announced by Gordon Brown in the 2007 Budget. It is too early to say how far this change will encourage more community use of

facilities, but in any case it does not adequately address the need for Academies to be closer to their local communities.

- 89 If Academies really are to be part of the local family of schools – forming part of the local community, acting as a positive force to raise local educational aspirations, and promoting local regeneration – then much more will need to be done. In particular, local parents and representatives of the local community would need to be more closely involved in the Academy to ensure it meets local needs.
- 90 Although it is generally acknowledged that parents have an important role to play in helping a poorly performing school recover (see NAO’s earlier report, *Improving Poorly Performing Schools in England*, 2006), having more parents on governing bodies has not been part of the Government’s plan for Academies. Instead, sponsors appoint the majority of governors and have looked to appoint representatives from Business and HE rather than parents (who may well also have relevant expertise). Currently, there is no requirement that Academies have more than one elected parent governor and one representative from the LA.
- 91 Even where a LA is a sponsor the LA cannot appoint more than two governors and the LA is not allowed to play a leading role according to a recent reply by Schools Minister, Jim Knight, to a Parliamentary Question on May 1 2007. There is no requirement for an Academy governing body to have any community representatives, nor any staff representatives. This potentially restricts severely the links with the local community and thus the contribution to local regeneration, although the latter is still claimed by ministers to be a reason for expanding the number of Academies from 200 to 400.¹⁰
- 92 It would be wrong to confuse the well-publicised popularity of Academies with local parents (strongly linked to having a new well-resourced school building) with parents feeling involved and engaged with Academies. Indeed, this popularity may decline when other local schools have new buildings under BSF.

Objective 4: Increasing staying on rates and a higher percentage into FE and HE

- 93 The success of Academies in increasing the rates of young people staying in education or training will be difficult to assess with any accuracy as there are no agreed measures yet for assessing this across schools generally, especially those without sixth forms. There is a consultation paper out on setting up systems to record the input by different schools and FE providers to the staying on rate.
- 94 The PwC report does not attempt to assess this objective. In contrast the NAO report looks simply at whether Academy sixth forms have performed well. It concludes that Academy performance at A level has been poor so far (para 2.18). In 2006, the average points score of pupils in the 13 Academy sixth forms was 541, well below the national average of 722 points. The main

¹⁰ *Hansard*, 16 Apr 2007: Column 288W

reasons given by the NAO are the small size of Academy sixth forms (an average of 34 pupils were taking A levels at each of the 13 open sixth forms), the poor legacy of educational standards and expectations from the predecessor schools, and the way Academies have prioritised pushing up attainment up to the age of 16.

- 95 However, these problems will not disappear quickly and it is difficult to see how Academies will turn this around on their own. The solution needs to include better collaboration with other providers and more planning with local authorities and the Learning and Skills Council to assess whether it is viable for an Academy to have a sixth form or not and to develop better 14–19 planning and delivery.
- 96 Recent developments in some local authorities such as Birmingham, Northumberland and Manchester illustrate how they are expecting to use Academies to promote local 14–19 planning and links with employers and future training. Such developments should help promote entry to FE and HE. In the case of Manchester the stated aim is for the new Academies co-sponsored by the LA to target under-performing schools in disadvantaged areas and to lead to a wider programme of regeneration. To do this successfully it will be essential for these Academies to be closely linked into the local community and with other providers. Another factor which will impact on Academies, as on other schools, is the Government's proposals to extend education and training until 18, which will automatically raise the staying on rates in all categories.
- 97 On the issue of whether Academies are developing a track record of increasing pupils' access to HE it is worth noting that some Academies have FE and HE providers as sponsors and this trend may help to promote this particular outcome. Moreover, the new way that sponsors are providing funding by setting up charitable investment funds will make it possible for Academies to use these funds to offer a range of support for those students who might otherwise be deterred from entering HE (though this should not be restricted to the Academies' own pupils).

Objective 5: Reducing absence and decreasing exclusions

- 98 Academies were expected to increase attendance by reducing authorised and unauthorised absences compared to similar schools within two years of opening. The reports by PwC and NAO have attempted to summarise what has happened in Academies but assessing comparative improvements has not proved to be straightforward.
- 99 According to PwC's evaluation report (para 5.3), Academies have made improvements in relation to authorised absences, but not in unauthorised absences. Over the period 2000/1 to 2003/4 total absences in Academies increased by 1.7 per cent, compared to a decline in the national average of 0.5 per cent over the same period. This is mainly due to the increases in unauthorised absences.

assessing the impact of academies

- 100 The NAO report compares the performance of Academies and similar schools across two years and finds that in 2005/6 Academies on average had better attendance than similar schools and had also achieved better reductions in absence compared to the previous year than EiC schools, Fresh Start and the average for all secondary schools.
- 101 But analysis of absence rates of Academies and their predecessor schools given in reply to a Parliamentary Question¹¹ shows a very mixed picture when based on authorised and unauthorised absence figures being added together and the changes in the totals compared. Of 18 Academies which can be compared with predecessor schools, eight showed improved absence rates, three were worse and seven were little changed (i.e. changed by less than the national average figure). Of 11 Academies for which two years data were given, five showed an improvement, two a decline and four showed little change.
- 102 Objective 5 also included a target for Academies to reduce within two years the level of permanent exclusions in Academies compared to similar schools. Both the reports from PwC (2006) and NAO (2007) indicate that levels of permanent exclusions are proportionally higher in Academies compared to similar schools. Both also suggest that an increase in permanent exclusions is often a feature of new or replacement schools and PwC says that the comparator schools used in their evaluation were not new schools whereas Academies were. The test will be whether, as Academies bed in, they will reduce their levels of permanent exclusions and sustain this over a number of years.
- 103 The other feature of Academies and exclusions is the diversity in exclusion levels for different Academies. For example, figures for the West London Academy in Ealing show that 22 pupils were permanently excluded in 2004/5, nearly 2 per cent of the school population. In contrast, some Academies have achieved a zero rate of exclusions just like many maintained schools. This mixed picture suggests that, once again, there is no distinctive 'Academy effect'.
- 104 Also, the seriously high exclusion rates at some Academies raise concerns about the lack of accountability of Academies which were set up before the 2006 Model Funding Agreement was in place. This agreement has helped bring later Academies more into line with the exclusion requirements on maintained schools, in particular over setting up an independent appeal panel which must be impartial and properly constituted in line with DfES guidance and whose members have received suitable training.
- 105 Any overuse of exclusions by individual Academies will continue to have a negative impact on other local schools in those areas. It will also continue to call into question whether higher achievement levels for Academies are related to changing the pupil population (excluding challenging pupils who might underachieve) rather than providing more effective ways of engaging disaffected pupils and more relevant and personalised learning. It would seem to be in the Government's own interests to ensure that Academies are

¹¹ *Hansard*, 9 January 2007, column WA77

- held more accountable over permanent exclusions. If this were to be required it might help reduce the number of permanent exclusions and help reduce the danger of 'overuse' of exclusions by particular Academies.
- 106 It has not been possible so far to compare data on fixed term exclusions for Academies with the rates for similar schools, because Academies have not been required to make the same returns on exclusions as maintained schools. However, exclusions are now being included in the annual School Census and Academies as well as maintained schools have been asked to return this data. The first findings relating to the 2005/06 school year will be available in June 2007 and this will provide a more comprehensive basis for comparing exclusion levels in Academies and other schools.
- 107 The PwC reports indicate that on pupil behaviour, Academies face considerable challenges. This is evidenced from the surveys of pupils in academies by PwC (pp 44/45). One fifth of pupils in the Academies evaluated in the PwC 3rd report thought that their behaviour was worse than before the school became an Academy and that levels of bullying were high. The Ofsted Annual Report on schools (2005/6) also indicated that behaviour was still a major problem in a number of Academies which had been inspected. The average score on behaviour in Ofsted's Key Judgements is 2.23 – this reflects that 6 Academies of the 13 inspected by March 2007 had scores of 3 for behaviour and one was given the lowest score with 4.
- 108 There is no silver bullet which can solve behaviour problems. Success involves a range of strategies such as recommended in the Steer Report (DfES, Oct 2005) and the DfES guidance on new powers to discipline pupils (April 2007). These strategies cover behaviour policies that are understood by all, are agreed with staff, governors, pupils and parents and applied consistently. Unfortunately, Academies are not required to follow the parts of the guidance that set out this consultation process on behaviour policies.
- 109 Ultimately, having an effective behaviour policy has nothing to do with a school's category and is more about developing, applying and reviewing sound policies. Of course, one way that schools could do a 'quick fix' on behaviour might be to exclude difficult pupils and/or change their intake to ensure they take more motivated pupils with motivated parents (as CTCs did). However, the new Admissions Code and Fair Access Protocol should prevent recourse to this by all schools in the future.
- 110 Another key factor in reducing poor behaviour and exclusions is having a relevant curriculum which engages pupils of different abilities and backgrounds. Whether Academies are developing such an approach at a faster pace than other maintained schools is raised below in relation to the Government's expectation that Academies are to develop innovative approaches to motivate pupils.
- 111 The recent DfES guidance on new powers to discipline pupils highlights that by September 2007 all secondary schools are expected to be in partnerships designed to improve behaviour and tackle persistent absence. This may

increase the pressure on Academies to work in greater partnership with other schools but it may take more specific incentives by the DfES to push them in this direction.

Objective 6: Acting as Centres of Excellence in their specialism(s)

- 112 It is difficult to find evidence of innovative approaches to the curriculum in Academies that are not also happening in many community secondary schools. The 2006 PwC report included surveys and visits to 15 Academies in 2005 and included interviews with principals, staff, sponsors and pupils about the use of innovative approaches to teaching and learning. Their report refers to: flexibility of timetabling; compulsory homework classes for pupils achieving below their potential; multi-partner working with speech and language therapists; and working with pupils on cross-curricular activities. However, none of these activities are unique to Academies.
- 113 Nor do the reports from Ofsted on Academies highlight many examples of innovative approaches to the curriculum or changes to the ways and times that pupils are taught in Academies. Occasionally Ofsted makes reference to new practices (such as the use of a motivational mantra for pupils before every lesson in one Academy). But an analysis of Ofsted reports on the London Challenge Keys to Success Schools and Academies showed a wide range of approaches and attempts to motivate pupils in both groups of school, with no sign that inspectors were identifying new and unique approaches to teaching and learning in Academies alone. There are references to extensions to the school day in Academies but this is also being used by some community schools.
- 114 The response to the survey undertaken by CSN with staff in Academies, although small, also shows that although there are extra classes or enrichment sessions these are often voluntary as they are in other schools. There is little sign that the much vaunted ‘freedoms and flexibilities’ available to Academies are actually being much used by those running these schools. Indeed, the evidence from the PwC surveys and interviews indicates that some Academies were beginning to pull back on some of the more innovative approaches that had been implemented in their first year.
- 115 The feedback from principals and other staff seems to suggest that in the early years of the programme there had been pressure on Academies to use alternative approaches to buildings, timetabling and pastoral groupings but that this had lessened in recent years. Asked whether Academies used a more flexible and innovative curriculum than other non-Academy schools, 52 per cent of staff in Academies opened before 2004 agreed, but only 45 per cent of staff working in Academies opened in 2004 agreed. The same disparity is found on questions about whether the timing of the school day/year had led to more innovation (49 per cent and 30 per cent respectively agreed with this statement – pp 30/31 PwC).

section five

time to take stock

- 116 As has already been observed, the Academies programme has been controversial since its introduction and proposals for new Academies continue to generate opposition in many cases. Yet the overarching aim of the programme – “to raise standards by breaking the cycle of underperformance and low expectations” – surely ought to be one which unites all those involved. So, why is this not the case, and how might that be changed? How could the energy and goodwill be harnessed of the full range of those with a contribution to make to raising education standards in general, and to fulfilling the aim of breaking the historic cycle of low expectation and poor performance in areas of significant disadvantage?
- Acknowledging other approaches**
- 117 First, it is important to recognise that the Academies programme is but one element of what needs to be a comprehensive strategy for addressing these issues. Whilst schools have a significant role to play, they cannot be expected successfully to tackle alone the effects of chronic disadvantage and social failure without the backing of a broader strategy involving the local authority and a range of other partners. The emphasis on Academies over recent years has distracted attention from other aspects of policy for addressing disadvantage and low attainment. Schools on their own can of course achieve a great deal, but they can achieve more, and more sustainably, as part of a wider strategy.
- 118 Moreover, many schools in deprived communities have already achieved great success without having Academy status. William Atkinson¹² forcefully articulates an approach in articles, interviews and conference presentations that is radically different from much of the Government’s current agenda but which has proved highly successful in his particular inner city school. And this is certainly not an isolated case. Many other secondary schools in disadvantaged communities without Academy status have been turned around through a combination of important factors, including high quality leadership and a motivated workforce that has a collective stake in the strategic direction of the school. In addition, some inner city local authorities that have demonstrated excellent improvements in educational standards have done so without any Academies.
- 119 The OECD’s PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) research has also concluded that the promotion of diversity of school provision undermines a system’s capacity to achieve consistent high

¹² Head teacher of Phoenix School, Hammersmith (once in special measures with just four per cent of pupils gaining five good GCSEs and currently the most improved secondary school in England with 77 per cent doing so)

standards for all children and young people. This research is referred to by Professor Peter Mortimore in his study, *Which Way Forward*¹³, which concludes that there is little evidence that competition and diversity of provision play any significant part in driving up standards.

Reviewing the current strategy

- 120 There is now a need for the Government to restate and clarify its overall strategy for raising standards, and to demonstrate that it is comprehensive and coherent and consistent with the approach of other Departments (especially Communities and Local Government). The Academies programme was essentially intended as a response to extreme and persistent difficulties. It is now essential to demonstrate how it fits with other initiatives to produce the maximum overall benefit and to avoid such unintended consequences as undermining progress in neighbouring schools.
- 121 This is particularly important in view of the recent apparent shift away from the original vision towards an approach which seems driven simply by the need to meet the new national target for 400 Academies. And the emphasis on the independent status of Academies, and the degree of control of sponsors, conflicts with the nature of the broader contribution they should be making – both as required through their funding agreements and as will be necessary to the success of the 14–19 curriculum and the new diploma arrangements.
- 122 If a major aim of the Academies programme is to inject some diversity and competition into secondary schooling, the Government needs to show how this can be reconciled with the need for much greater integration. Especially if new policies such as the new admissions code, the 14–19 diplomas and raising the participation age to 18 are to succeed.
- 123 In effect, a review of the programme is required and the creation of some appropriate criteria for the establishment of any future new schools and the involvement of sponsors. This should lead to a far more effective implementation of the BSF programme and a much clearer understanding by all involved of the full range of initiatives supporting improvement in each locality. Including, crucially, how all relevant institutions and partners will be expected to work together to improve outcomes for every child. In particular, local authorities should be left to exercise their legitimate role in such matters without unwarranted pressure from central Government to which they have been subjected to add to the Academy tally.
- 124 This would potentially overcome some of the problems that have been a feature of the Academies programme so far and provide a mechanism for moving forward more constructively. The danger, for the Government, of simply ‘ploughing on’ with the programme on the present basis is that the range and magnitude of problems will grow as the programme expands towards ten per cent of secondary provision, and a unique opportunity to review and re-configure the programme will be lost.

¹³ *Which Way Forward?* by Prof. Peter Mortimore, NUT, May 2006 (There is of course a considerable literature on the controversial issue of the relationship between competition and quality in education. Much depends on the nature of the ‘market’ and few would claim that there is a level playing field between Academies and maintained schools).

Isolating and tackling the most contentious issues

- 125 A number of factors have contributed to the controversy around Academies thus far and to continuing opposition. First, the programme was introduced with no prior consultation and with the clear intention of largely by-passing local authorities and other key players. It was a ‘radical’ solution to a long-standing problem, which offered a remedy that had not been available to those implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) held responsible for failing to successfully address that problem.
- 126 Few, surely, would have objected to the concept of a dramatic initiative to support unpopular schools serving predominantly disadvantaged communities, by providing them with flagship new buildings and high quality management in order to reverse the historic trend of decline that many had battled against for years without the means to effect such a dramatic change. But, instead of being engaged in the enterprise, as part of the solution, too many potential partners – notably, local authorities, staff, unions, governors and parents – were marginalised and treated as part of the problem.
- 127 The programme heavily promoted the particular contribution which could be made by ‘external’ partners (sponsors), operating with a high level of autonomy. The rationale for this was based on a misplaced interpretation of the perceived success of City Technology Colleges, Voluntary Aided and some grant-maintained schools and examples from overseas that failed to take proper account of other significant factors that clearly contributed to such success as they achieved. The effect has been to generate resentment and to create a sense of Academies being ‘outside the system’, not really part of it.
- 128 There has been a particular emphasis on the value of involving the private sector, particularly business. This has created widespread suspicion and anxiety about appropriate safeguards against abuse (e.g. reported incidents of sponsors’ companies supplying goods and services to Academies which has only contributed to these concerns). Similarly, there is a suspicion that some private companies are keen to get involved for business reasons, not out of altruism or philanthropy. Bluntly, there is also the view that the Academies programme is a vehicle for the privatisation of state school provision.
- 129 For a relatively modest one-off contribution (compared to the level of state funding), sponsors are able to exercise a disproportionate influence over a very long (potentially indefinite) period. Academies are not subject to the education law which applies to other state-funded schools and there is precious little democratic accountability (with what there is being through Government ministers, not local politicians). For example, parents’ redress on issues such as special educational needs provision, exclusions and appeals, and admission appeals are greatly diminished and there is little their elected representatives (Councillors or MPs) can do to assist them.
- 130 Rather than being trialled and assessed for its effectiveness, value for money, and other clear criteria, the programme was being rolled out steadily

towards a target of 200 Academies open or in progress by 2010. That has since been doubled to 400, despite the continuing lack of rigorous evidence to demonstrate that the approach is either more effective, or better value, than alternatives. It also defies the original rationale to have doubled the target number of Academies from 200 to 400 when, during the interval between the announcements, the number of secondary schools in special measures halved from 97 to 48.

Need for an evidence-based approach

- 131 As a controversial, high-stakes political policy, the programme has been subject to frequent scrutiny, often perceived by Ministers as attack, from a variety of sources. Too often, neither the analysis nor the response have been adequately informed or substantiated. Positions rapidly became polarised, and the subsequent ‘debate’ has generally lacked the openness, or honesty, that should accompany enquiry into what is, by any standards, a major education policy experiment. In particular, there has been a tendency to rely on levels of oversubscription as ‘evidence’ of the policy’s success but, in reality, it may well simply be evidence of parents’ eagerness to select brand new facilities, and the promise of positive change, rather than the more mundane alternatives open to them.
- 132 This is a fairly inevitable consequence of the extent to which Academies are consistently ‘talked up’ as the best form of provision, and the level of publicity and promotion which accompanies each project – and it is subject to two problems. Initially, it is generating a growing number of parents whose hopes and expectations are raised, only to be disappointed as a consequence of the level of oversubscription. It actually seems quite perverse to claim as a political success a policy which disappoints up to nine families for each one that it satisfies.
- 133 Also, as BSF progresses, and other schools in the locality of Academies are replaced or upgraded to a similar standard, the appeal of Academies will appear to diminish as the level of oversubscription declines. Indeed, given the level of ‘hype’ attached to Academies, they may suffer worse than an apparent diminution of appeal if they fail to improve at a rate to match the heightened expectations of parents and local communities. Or, as is often the case, if their success is perceived as being in part at the expense of the other local schools to which the majority of Academy applicants are actually obliged to send their children. In other words, if the problem they are intended to solve is merely shifted elsewhere.
- 134 Taking all these factors into account, there is a very strong case from both a policy perspective and a political perspective for the Government to grasp the opportunity at this particular time of change to undertake an over-arching review and to set a clear new direction for secondary school provision that will benefit all young people and their families, particularly the most disadvantaged.

section six

setting out a new direction

- 135 Recently, a number of changes in the implementation of the Academies programme have suggested some signs of a more constructive approach. However, it remains the case that parties (such as unions, local authorities and community groups) who should be willing, indeed enthusiastic, partners to the declared aim of the programme still have continuing objections to the programme in its present form. Some of the most notable examples of this continuing opposition are as follows:
- Local authorities, many of which have been coerced into participation by pressure exerted through management of their BSF proposals. In some cases, this has led to the inclusion of Academy proposals against the sincerely held belief that they were not in the best educational interests of meeting overall needs in an area, nor a sensible feature of a coherent local approach. Among other local authorities, reluctance to ‘comply’ appears to have led to a delay in the approval of BSF plans. Even where participation in the programme has been entirely willing (even enthusiastic), that has generally been for financial reasons, and considerable reservations often remain about aspects of the programme, which are widely shared by others.
 - Local communities, which have sometimes been exposed to similar pressures, leading to a feeling that their choice lies between a new school of a character they do not like or no new school at all.
 - School staff, and their unions, who remain concerned at the implications of the freedoms given to Academies to set their own employment terms and conditions, and the lack of accountability.
 - School governors, many of whom have great reservations about the governance arrangements of Academies.
 - Other local schools, which often feel that the introduction of an Academy into the locality will detrimentally affect their own prospects, without necessarily contributing to the overall improvement of standards in the area.
- 136 So, how could these particular issues be addressed in order to reverse the continuing controversial and divisive nature of the programme without abandoning the basic concept of a radical solution to the challenges of educational under-achievement in some of our most disadvantaged communities? From the evidence to date, it is clear that the Academies

programme needs to take a radically different direction if it is going to square this circle.

What does the evidence really tell us?

- 137 First, though, there needs to be a genuinely inquisitive approach to evidence of the impact on outcomes which is attributable to particular aspects of changes in education policy. It might be expected that such an approach would be natural to a responsible Government committed to evidence-based policy and interested in the most effective, and cost effective, policies it could deploy in pursuit of its aims. Since this evidence is bound to emerge over time, it is surely better to hasten the process and derive the maximum benefit.
- 138 On this basis, a proper comparative study should be initiated into the impact of all aspects of the full variety of recent initiatives: Academies, Fresh Start, Excellence in Cities, and London Challenge. And of course, the impact of new school buildings and changes in management in schools not necessarily associated with any of these developments. Given the urgency of meeting chronic need in many areas, this is not a proposal for a major longitudinal study, but for gathering the full range of evidence that can be assembled and investigating it rigorously and independently.
- 139 It is beyond dispute that the Academies programme is significantly more expensive than other initiatives and that it also generates significant conflict, within local communities of schools and politically. If the educational benefits are not conclusively greater than those derived from less costly and disruptive alternatives, then the rationale for pursuing the policy becomes ever harder to defend against the charge of dogmatism. That danger is already present and in effect, the onus of ‘proof’ rests with the Government. If it is unable to demonstrate, through robust research and evidence, that this more costly and contentious high-profile policy brings sufficiently greater benefits than would the alternatives, then it is surely time to review and re-think the programme.
- 140 So far, it has not been possible to demonstrate such a different scale of benefit specifically attributable to Academy status. Claims about the progress of Academies are undermined by a number of factors. Although, on average, the rate of improvement in Academies has been faster than the national average, it has been very mixed. PwC’s third evaluation report says, “On balance the evidence over this period [2002–2005] suggests that the improvements in pupil performance in Academies, when taken as a group, are better than in other schools with similar characteristics, although the absolute differences are generally small”¹⁴. In the large majority of cases, Academies’ predecessor schools were already showing improvements. Despite many having been in Ofsted categories, most had improved sufficiently for such designations to be lifted before becoming Academies.
- 141 This raises the question of how far the improvements achieved were the result of the new Academy status and how far they arose from the

¹⁴ PwC, Third Evaluation Report, para 6.2

interventions already put in place by the local authority. As stated above, the NAO report¹⁵ shows that in general there was a fairly steady rise in percentage of pupils achieving 5 GCSEs at A–C grades both before and after schools changed to become Academies. The exception to this was that there was a better rate of improvement in GCSE results during the year immediately after a school became an Academy. However, after this brief jump in results, the NAO chart shows that there is a return to a more gradual rate of improvement and that the combined rate of increase was greater in the two years before predecessor schools became Academies than in the combined second and third years of them operating as Academies.

142 Schools subject to other forms of intervention – Excellence in Cities, London Challenge and effective targeted Local Authority interventions – have all shown significant improvements. In most cases this has been achieved at far lower cost and often as part of an initiative which has a greater level of built-in collaboration with neighbouring schools, thus building the capacity of provision across an area in a way that Academies have been criticised for (so far) failing to do.

143 Comparison with the performance of other schools which have experienced some of the characteristics of the Academies programme – new buildings and/or new management teams – is not possible, because the DfES does not have the necessary information¹⁶. However, as recently as 28 March, the DfES announced the findings of new research which links capital investment with increased participation levels at Further Education colleges¹⁷. There is no reason why similar changes should not arise from capital investment in schools, and the Department is apparently assembling information on new schools which would enable this to be investigated.

Future challenges for the programme

144 Over time, it is possible that evidence of a greater, beneficial ‘Academy effect’ might emerge which would indeed justify the additional cost. On the other hand, it is perhaps more likely that as the programme expands existing problems will grow and new issues, such as problems over collaborative arrangements needed to deliver the 14–19 diplomas, will arise.

145 The capacity of the DfES to oversee and support the programme at anything like the current level is not sustainable. The Department is committed to scaling down its operation, yet the reply to a recent Parliamentary Question indicated that it has already spent almost £50 million on consultants to support aspects of the programme¹⁸. As the number of Academies grows so too, inevitably, will the volume of problems arising (just as in any other group of schools) ranging from individual casework to more complex issues. The prospect of the Secretary of State being responsible for 400 secondary schools, by definition working in challenging circumstances, and regulated almost entirely through inflexible contracts rather than education law, is surely not attractive, particularly for a Government committed to more local empowerment.

¹⁵ *The Academies Programme*, National Audit Office, February 2007 (figure 5)

¹⁶ House of Commons Public Accounts Committee hearing, 14 March 2007, Qs 83–85

¹⁷ DfES Press Notice 2007/0056, 28 March 2007

¹⁸ *Hansard*, 30 Apr 2007: Column 1467W

- 146 The DfES has recently been obliged to respond explicitly to concerns about the apparent tensions between aspects of its key policies on raising standards and the more recent Every Child Matters agenda. The Academies programme, with its particular emphasis on independence and its separation from the local authority maintained family of schools, exemplifies this tension.
- 147 In some local authorities (e.g. Southwark and Hackney) the proportion of provision made by Academies, and the accompanying loss of resources, will potentially weaken the capacity of the authority to function effectively on behalf of local pupils and parents and in respect of other schools. It will also create confusion and difficulties for local parents, for whom the DfES will become a 'parallel' (or even surrogate) education authority.
- 148 The difficulty of recruiting exceptional head teachers will either impact on the Academies programme itself, or will add to the perception that Academies are increasing the problems of other schools in disadvantaged areas by competing on unequal terms. In addition, the demand for school improvement services will rapidly outstrip the current supply of support available to such an expanded independent sector (a concern recently expressed by the Schools Commissioner himself).
- 149 The presence of a significant proportion of 'independent state schools' will skew the outcome of statutory processes to tackle surplus capacity in the face of falling school rolls, which will be a significant trend over coming years in many areas. It is likely to contribute to increased competition between schools for pupils and staff, and to undermine a collaborative, strategic approach to securing improved provision even in challenging circumstances.

A new direction

- 150 So, what changes might be introduced in order that the primary aim of the Academies programme could be met whilst minimising the problems outlined above, and maximising the benefits from a more positive engagement of a broader range of partners?
- 151 As we have argued above, the first requirement is to review the current position. First, there is a need to assess the evidence of the effectiveness and cost effectiveness of the full range of current improvement initiatives. Secondly, there is a need to clarify and re-state a coherent strategic approach to school improvement, raising aspiration and attainment, and regenerating communities – showing clearly what is the expectation on schools in this process. Finally, there is a need to develop appropriate criteria for the establishment of new schools and the involvement of sponsors as part of this strategy and to devise a clearer account of the distinct role they are expected to play within it.
- 152 A number of recent, and apparently forthcoming, changes to secondary provision in general are likely to contribute, and are a good basis on which to build a new approach. For example, the impact of perhaps the most striking feature of the Academies programme so far – the creation of highly desirable

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new school buildings in place of often quite poor quality provision – is being rapidly diminished by the broader impacts of the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme.

- 153 In addition, the new School Admissions Code, the emphasis on personalisation, increased encouragement of collaboration, the new 14–19 Diplomas and other proposals for changes to the curriculum and to assessment will make it inevitable that schools and colleges in an area should work more closely together. Together with extended provision and the increasing integration of a range of services for young people and families through Every Child Matters, this will significantly soften the sharp boundaries between providers, as needs are increasingly met across more than one institution.
- 154 Reducing poverty, the successful regeneration of communities and improvements in social cohesion will further increase a sense of common purpose across localities. Local authorities have a major role in most of these developments (albeit a role which is changing), and it will seem increasingly anachronistic to have some ten per cent of state secondary schools operated on a fundamentally different basis from the large majority.
- 155 The logic of harmonisation is likely to become irrefutable, as it was felt to be, for example, with direct grant schools and, more recently, grant-maintained status. A review of the Academies programme so far, and the changing context in which they operate, might usefully identify a number of options for the future. It seems unlikely that simply pressing on towards a target of 400, with little in the way of an articulated vision for how the secondary system as a whole might be operating effectively in, say, five years time, would emerge as the most convincing strategy.
- 156 In order to remedy that situation, it would be necessary to restore Academies, in some way, to the maintained sector – to which the large body of education law applies. However, it would be perfectly possible for progress to be made in this direction without dismantling the positive elements of the programme. Whilst the longer-term aim should be to use significant primary legislation to return Academies to the maintained sector, this is not realistic in the short term. There needs to be an alternative strategy to tackle the shortcomings of the ‘Academy model’ in the immediate future.
- 157 The simplest option may be simply to further amend the nature of the model funding agreement that applies to Academies, in particular to improve the present governance arrangements in order to address the deficiencies in accountability. Changes should include the introduction of elected staff representatives on governing bodies, an increase in the number of elected parent governors, an increase in the number of local authority appointed governors and removal of the present limit on local authority representation (especially when the authority is also a sponsor). Incidentally, Academies should also be made subject to the Freedom of Information Act, which would also improve their accountability and bring them into line with other public bodies.

- 158 The funding agreement should also be strengthened to make explicit a number of requirements that would secure Academies full participation in local collaborative arrangements, in line with the Secretary of State's expectation. Changes to the funding agreement could be applied to new Academies, but cannot be made retrospective, so would have to be negotiated with all the existing Academies. Whilst this would bring about a number of improvements, it would do nothing to address the fundamental problem of a large number of state secondary schools operating outside the normal framework of education law.
- 159 Any significant change in the status of Academies would obviously require some serious negotiation with existing sponsors, but in view of the changing situation around Academies such a process should not prove intractable. The Sponsors are a group whose contribution to the programme is itself evidence of a major commitment to raising aspiration and achievement amongst disadvantaged communities, so the discussion would essentially be about reforming and modernising that contribution. The context would clearly be that of a serious attempt to address the issues raised in this report in order to improve the prospects of success towards that objective by removing some current barriers to the constructive and whole-hearted engagement of a broader range of partners in supporting secondary schools in the most challenging circumstances.

section seven

conclusion and recommendations

- 160 The new direction for secondary school provision set out in this report requires a clear commitment from Government about the need to review the various elements of the existing system in order to give a much more rounded picture of what is working well and also the main barriers to further progress. This process would identify key areas where reform of the system is required in order to ensure that secondary school provision in all parts of the country is uniformly delivering to a high standard, especially in tackling the legacy of educational underachievement in some communities.
- 161 As the TUC General Secretary highlighted in his foreword to this report, few doubt the Government's commitment to, and success in, improving educational achievement and tackling poverty in our most disadvantaged communities. There is also little doubt that the Government is genuinely committed to achievement of this aim through the range of school improvement measures that it is currently implementing. However, one of the problems is that there is a general perception that the Academies programme is the only such measure in place and this perception is reinforced by the media attention that the programme has attracted.
- 162 The controversial aspects of the Academies programme have led to a disparate national debate on the overall impact of the wider range of school improvement measures and this has in turn inhibited how Government and key partners can work together to further develop the strategy for improving the quality of secondary school provision. Two of the four recommendations below address this key challenge and if acted on would offer a real opportunity for all partners to come together with Government to agree a new direction that would have widespread support and would build on successes to date.
- 163 However, the findings of this report highlight that the Government also needs to undertake an immediate review of the operation of the Academies programme in conjunction with partners in order to tackle some of the main areas of controversy. As set out in the previous section of this report, there is an urgent need to tackle some of the shortcomings of the 'Academy model' in the short-term through further amendments to the model funding agreement for Academies. For example, by further building on the reform of the role of sponsors and giving local authorities a greater strategic role and by ensuring that Academies generally adhere to national standards that are applied to the maintained sector by the force of education law.

- 164 However, there also needs to be a longer-term strategy to restore Academies to the maintained sector and this would require the Government to use primary legislation to ultimately achieve this objective. In the meantime the Government needs to work towards this by achieving consensus among partners on appropriate criteria for the establishment of any future new schools and the involvement of sponsors. This should lead to a far more effective implementation of the BSF programme and a much clearer understanding by, and support from, all partners involved in the full range of initiatives supporting improvement in each locality.
- 165 Finally, there is a need to address the deficiencies within the Academy model for supporting the collective voice of the workforce as articulated by the school workforce unions. The fragmented nature of union recognition across Academies undermines the huge advantages of a coherent collective voice for teachers and support staff that is found in the maintained sector. And linked to this, there is a need for the Government to ensure that stronger safeguards are put in place to ensure that the flexibilities given to Academies on workforce issues are not used by them to undermine the current national framework for pay and conditions which applies to the majority of the workforce in maintained schools, especially as the impact of TUPE wanes.
- 166 The recommendations below provide a positive starting point for developing a wider dialogue on building a new direction for secondary school provision that would support, and build on, the Government's achievements to date.

Key recommendations

- 167 The Government should:
1. Establish an independent panel of academics and policy specialists to assess, briefly but rigorously, each element of its school improvement approach in order that the effectiveness of each element may be judged against each other, including the cost and other relevant factors.
 2. Re-state and clarify its overall approach to school improvement in the light of this assessment, showing clearly the part played by each initiative (including the Academies programme) and how they mesh together to form a comprehensive and coherent strategy, bearing in mind the importance of local authority school improvement services.
 3. Agree to review the Academies programme in the light of the changes that have taken place in the programme itself and in the context within which it operates since it was announced in 2000 with the aim of developing a strategy involving the following steps:
 - a. determining how existing mechanisms in the programme (e.g. the funding agreement) can be better utilised to address key shortcomings, in particular around accountability issues and the role of sponsors;
 - b. working with partners to develop agreed criteria for the establishment of new schools and the involvement of sponsors;

conclusion & recommendations

- c. reviewing the position of Academies outside the maintained sector and considering framing new legislation to reverse this.
- 4. Work in partnership with the school workforce unions to ensure that:
 - a. Union recognition is an entitlement in all Academies on the same basis as it is in maintained schools.
 - b. Academies are required to offer pay and conditions that are at least as favourable as the national frameworks for teachers and support staff in maintained schools.

section eight

sources of information

Listed below are the main sources used in writing the report. It includes recent sources that became available during 2006/7 and the key documents referred to in the text. Please note that some sources have only been listed as footnotes in the main text. Some of the information obtained from the DfES Academies Division is referred to below and more detail on this is available on the CSN website

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Department for Education and Skills (DfES) (2007)

400 Academies: A Prospectus for Sponsors and Local authorities

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www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/resourcesfinanceandbuilding/

— (2006) *Delivering Academy Buildings through PfS: an overview for sponsors*

www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/Academies/word/BuildingGuidelines.doc?version=1

— The ‘State of Play’ Spreadsheet on Academies, April 2007. Information on open and planned Academies was requested and provided by the Academies Division at the DfES. Information from this spreadsheet can be found on the CSN website www.csn@info

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- PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (PwC) (2005) *Academies Evaluation: Second Annual Report*
- PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (PwC) (2006) *Academies Evaluation: Third Annual Report*. (The PwC reports and the DfES responses to these reports can be found at the DfES Standards Site on Academies. See below for details. Briefings on the PwC evaluation reports can also be found on the CSN website www.csn.info)
- UNISON (2006) *Academies Called to Account*

Useful websites

DfES – The Standards Site: Academies

This site includes a range of information about Academies, including information for Academy sponsors and principals, the details of the various model funding agreements, governance arrangements, and copies of the PwCs evaluation reports and the DfES responses to these reports.

www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/Academies/

DfES – The London Challenge

This site includes information about the Keys to Success programme which aims to raise standards in some of the most challenging London schools and break the link between deprivation and underachievement. It includes facts and figures about performance in these schools and also about collaboration between schools. The Government is funding the London programme for a further three years and extending it to schools in deprived areas in the Black Country and Greater Manchester.

www.dfes.gov.uk/londonchallenge/

Ofsted website

This site contains the inspection reports for secondary schools and includes those for Academies. The section five reports include the inspection scores on key areas such as achievement and standards, pupils' personal development, including behaviour and attendance, and school leadership.

www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports/



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