

Towards an Academy in Sevenoaks: Critical Steps

Why an Academy?

- An opportunity to radically reshape the educational provision available
- An opportunity to secure resources that the Academy programme provides to make an enduring difference to life chances for young people by raising levels both of achievement and attainment
- The delivery of new buildings and ICT infrastructure, enhancing curricular opportunity and developing key skills for life and work, through new models of learning
- An opportunity for educational enrichment, enhancement and growth in professional capacity, for all school communities involved

What is an Academy?

- An independent state school, financed and built in partnership between sponsors and the government
- *Usually* located in areas of disadvantage, replacing one or more schools facing challenging circumstances
- Each is unique, able to provide local solutions for local needs, drawing on the expertise of its sponsors to help deliver a distinctive ethos and mission
- Each has the flexibility to be creative in curriculum design, time-tabling, organisation and governance
- Each offers a broad and balanced curriculum, focussing on one or more specialisms
- Successful academies share specialist experience and facilities with other schools and with the local community
- Academies play their part in the regeneration of communities, providing a focus for learning and raising aspiration

How are they different? (Key features of Kent Academies)

- Innovative curricular models
- Focus on the individual learner
- Collaborative curricular offer
- Inclusive Vocational Centres
- Pastoral house systems and advisories
- Parent/Carer partnerships to drive improvement
- Facilities accessible for community learning and leisure
- 'State of the art' science and technology provision
- Flexible learning environments that are fit for purpose, comfortable and that inspire
- ICT infrastructures that support 'anytime and any place' learning

Critical Steps

Assuming a successful period of informal consultation resulting in a matching of schools and sponsors, together with tacit approval from the DCSF to move forward, there are **four critical steps** towards the establishment of an academy

- **Expression of Interest (Eol)**
- **Feasibility Phase**
- **Funding Agreement**
- **Implementation Phase**

Lead professional officers operate throughout the process, involving sponsors as appropriate and providing for as active a degree of involvement as sponsors require. KCC officers maintain regular contact with sponsors, DCSF, and other key stakeholders, as well as engaging with and supporting the academies' project management structure, is detailed below.

Step 1: Expression of Interest (Eol)

Proposals for the project are worked up into an **Expression of Interest (Eol)** which is drafted by KCC officers in consultation with sponsors and agreed by all the local stakeholders before being submitted to Ministers in the DCSF.

The **Expression of Interest (Eol)** outlines the need, the proposed specialism/s and innovative proposals for change. During the development of the academy's **Eol** the sponsors will be involved in determining:

- Location, size, character and specialism of the academy
- Level of new build and/or of refurbishment
- Timing for opening the academy and building completion
- Initial overall cost estimate

Indicative time-scale: 8 weeks

(August 2008?)

Step 2: Feasibility Phase

If Ministers are minded to proceed, a **Feasibility Phase** begins. The DCSF releases feasibility funding to support detailed development work on the academy. During this phase, an independent Project Management Consultancy (PMC), funded by the DCSF, is commissioned and an independent Project Manager is appointed.

A **Project Steering Group (PSG)** that will work with sponsors to develop the detail of the project and conduct local consultation is established.

Each academy project has a **Project Steering Group (PSG)** responsible for:

- Delivering the education vision and design brief (including the curriculum model and key policies e.g. admissions)
- Delivering and implementing the Consultation Plan (including any PR and publicity)
- Establishing the Academy Trust and its registration as a Charity

Sponsors are, of course, represented on the **PSG** and a senior sponsor is usually appointed to assume chairmanship of it. Other key stakeholders are also represented on the **PSG**.

Indicative time-scale: 24 weeks

(January 2009?)

Step 3: Funding Agreement

Once the Feasibility Phase is completed successfully, the DCSF enters into a binding **Funding Agreement** with the sponsors. The process towards the **Funding Agreement** is partly concurrent with the Feasibility Phase. This confirms the essential characteristics of the academy, including size, location, time-scale, subject specialism/s, admission arrangements, age range and governance.

The **Funding Agreement** is a formal binding agreement between the Secretary of State and the Academy Trust for the academy to open on a specified date. This document contains all the formal information necessary for the opening and funding of the academy.

**Indicative time-scale: within 20 weeks of completion of Feasibility Phase
(June 2009?)**

Step 4: Implementation Phase

The **Implementation Phase** begins from the signing of the **Funding Agreement** and lasts until the opening of the academy. It allows for construction and delivery of new buildings, (up to 18 months for a new build Academy) and building work is its dominant feature, although Governance arrangements are also determined by the Academy Trust during this phase.

KCC will set up a **Project Team**, accountable to the **PSG** to manage the delivery of the academy. The Project Team is responsible for:

- Planning and management of the building procurement process through all phases of delivery
- Reporting to **PSG/Academy Trust** on progress and performance
- Day to day management of the **Design Group** (see below)
- Development of the **Outline Business Case (OBC)** and **Final Business Case (FBC)**

- Procurement of the 'Framework Contractor'
- Handover of the completed facility to the Academy Trust

The **PSG** and the **KCC Project Team** also establish a **Design Group** to be responsible for:

- Guardianship of the sponsors' vision for the academy
- Being the main stakeholder body for consultation on all design matters
- Ensuring design is within the agreed funding envelope
- Setting the Design Quality Indicators for the scheme
- Signing off the final designs by the preferred bidder

As the **OBC** is developed, the sponsors will be involved in:

- Development of the education vision for the academy
- Development of the Project Brief, which sets out required facilities
- Input on designs
- Development of ICT approach

As the **FBC** is developed, the sponsors will be involved in:

- Consultations on designs
- Agreements on ICT provision
- Consultations on final designs for approval to reach agreed design
- Agreements on final costs

The **Sponsors** then:

- Are consulted on any major construction issues
- Agree level of services to be provided
- Attend milestone events
- Sign off building works against specification

Planning and implementation processes

Partnership for Schools (PfS) is the Non-Department Public Body that is responsible for the delivery of the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) and Academies programmes. They possess expertise in procurement and building and have responsibility for procuring academy buildings in partnership with the Local Authority (KCC). The Sevenoaks Academy will be procured using the PfS National Framework. The process of procurement under this framework will be managed by KCC and PfS.

Indicative time scale: approximately 12 months from EoI being drafted to an Academy opening in existing buildings
Approximately a further 18 months for a new build academy to be delivered

Academy Governance

Academies are independent schools funded under contract (the **Funding Agreement**) by the DCSF. They are governed by a company (known as the Academy Trust) which delegates functions to Directors, i.e. governors, who are appointed, nominated or selected by the sponsors, the Local Authority, DCSF and parents/carers.

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

Any project to replace a maintained school with an academy must be endorsed by KCC at the **Feasibility Phase**, and its views taken fully into account at the **Funding Agreement** stage.

The governing bodies of academies include stakeholder governors: a parent governor, a Local Authority appointee, and generally the Principal ex officio (usually appointed 3 traditional terms in advance of the academy opening i.e. September 2008?). They may also include a teacher and a staff governor, and one or more community representatives.

The Governing Body is accountable to the Secretary of State for the DCSF through the requirements of the **Funding Agreement**. The Governing Body must publish proceedings of meetings, prepare annual accounts and an annual report, and ensure its accounts are independently audited.

The academy governors are responsible for:

- Appointing the Principal;
- Employing the staff;
- Administering the finances;
- Authorising appointments and any changes to terms and conditions;
- Approving the curriculum, personnel policies and procedures.

The governors are bound by law to act in the best interests of the academy, its students and the local community.

Admissions arrangements are agreed with the DCSF and are in line with the School Admissions Code.

March 2008