

Submission from Derby College Chair of Governors and Principal

A vision for the creation of Academies

Introduction

Derby College is pleased to support the City Council in its ambition for increasing choice and diversity in the secondary phase of education and its vision to achieve better outcomes for all Derby's learners. The College is very keen to play its own part in supporting the realisation of that vision and is willing to consider the sponsorship of up to two new academies in the City.

About the College

Derby College is a public body. The College (along with all 460 other colleges in the country) became independent from local authority control in 1992. Most of the funding of the College comes from government through the Learning and Skills Council although from 2009 the Local Authority will again resume responsibility for most of that funding. The College has a long standing successful track record in working in partnership with the local authority and secondary schools across the City. The College has a governing body made up from local representatives who include councillors, head teachers, industrial/commercial leaders as well as staff and student representatives. Their performance is monitored in the same way as schools by OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education).

The College provides educational opportunities for over 20,000 learners who may attend on a full time, part time or through flexible programmes. The majority of full-time students attending the College range in age from 14 to 18. Courses cover a wide range of subjects and these are delivered in the new Joseph Wright Centre, Broomfield Hall, Prince Charles Avenue and Masons Place. The College is also developing a new centre at the Roundhouse on Pride Park which will open in 2009 and will be the College's flagship site.

The College provides a high quality education for its students and its current success rates are over 82% and all curriculum areas perform above national benchmarks. The College has been given Centre of Vocational Excellence status in four areas – Construction, Engineering, IT and Retailing. OFSTED have recognised the strong leadership of the College, its effective promotion of equal opportunities and diversity, and its constructive local partnerships.

Why does the College want to sponsor an Academy?

The mission of the College is to achieve outstanding learner success through transforming the organisation in response to skills priorities to meet the needs of individuals and employers. This will be achieved by providing high quality education and training to enable students and their communities to improve their life chances and to be successful. The College already does this through its own programmes and through work that it does with partner schools, businesses and the wider community.

The College believes that by becoming directly involved in the sponsorship of one or more Academies it can use its existing expertise and capabilities to bring about a step change in improved learning outcomes for the students of the Academy.

The Vision

Any Academy sponsored by the College will become a 'Centre for Excellence in Education for All'. Its ethos of high aspirations, expectations and achievements will enable students to benefit from quality teaching and learning which is based on good educational practice that already exists in the College.

The College wants to build on the progress already achieved in each potential Academy and work to support that progress with students and their parents, staff and managers in the school and the wider community. The College believes that it can only be successful in this vision by working in partnership with the Council and other stakeholders to develop plans for the Academy which recognise the uniqueness of the communities they serve.

The College already teaches students from the existing schools and many of these come to the College without having achieved 5 GCSE grades C-A* or the equivalent at 16. Within 12 months a significant majority of those students will have achieved this level and be preparing to move onto further programmes, training or employment. We believe that many of these students could achieve at 16 and the Academy development will enable us to look at how the curriculum can be matched to learners to improve motivation, aspiration and achievement.

What will this mean for students?

Students at the Academy will continue to study all of the normal curriculum areas and have a strong emphasis on getting the basics right, with the curriculum focusing on developing essential skills in English, Maths and Information Handling. They will receive a range of high quality learning experiences. These will be designed to:

- be inclusive
- facilitate the transition from school to further and higher education, and employment, by offering real life stimulating contexts for learning
- be flexible to ensure students are able to pursue individual initiatives and projects
- be based on the skills and competencies required for the changing world of work

The Academy will lead on the development of new courses and approaches to learning and teaching. Students will benefit from a core entitlement of curricular experiences within a modern education tailored to meet the specific needs of each individual. This will include:

- An emphasis on raising students' aspirations, confidence, skills and aptitudes to succeed in a world where the pace of change is ever increasing
- A strong emphasis on communication skills to help develop confidence, self-esteem and increasing independence
- Access to a wide range of additional opportunities which support academic and personal development

Students at the Academy will also have access to the wide range of resources, staffing and expertise of the College.

What will it mean for Staff?

The College prides itself as an employer of choice and wants the same for any Academy that it is involved with. We would want to recognise and build on the recent and significant improvements by staff in the current schools. We believe that staff will be the most important resource in the Academy and a College sponsored Academy will provide them with additional opportunities to gain professional satisfaction and fulfilment from their job. The College is committed to a fair, caring and responsible approach to staff. In assuming responsibility for the school it would wish to foster an ongoing relationship based on consultation with staff and their professional associations. The College will ensure that the TUPE process is managed in a fair and transparent manner. Teaching staff will be complemented by a wide range of support personnel, ensuring that all energies are fully focused on teaching and learning. It is envisaged that teachers will manage classes smaller than the national average.

The values of the College which underpin the vision of our organisation would also be key within any new academy. These include:

- openness in discussion and decision-making processes
- mutual respect and trust within the organisation



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- respecting equal opportunities principles in all policies, procedures and practices
- recognising that the people within the college are its source of strength and quality
- supporting and developing staff and students within a culture which promotes equality of opportunity and cultural harmonisation
- high regard for personal interactions
- pride in effective systems and procedures which enable staff to achieve organisational objectives
- continually improving its teaching and learning resources and the physical environment to enhance the quality of its programmes and other services
- commitment to ensuring high quality leadership at all levels in the organisation

What will the Academy be like?

A major factor in the transformation of a school to an Academy is the creation of a different and unique learning environment. Most of the specific design of any Academy will be determined during the feasibility phase, following a programme of consultation with students, staff, parents, the Board of Governors and other stakeholders. The College intends to build on its own experience of creating unique and exciting places of learning and to integrate this with best practice from other schools and centres of education excellence across the country. The academy will have excellent facilities, including:

- Flexible classroom spaces which are easy to reconfigure
- Ready access to a full range of modern ICT resources
- Lifts and modified furniture and equipment to ensure that students with physical disabilities and impairments are able to fully access the building and curriculum
- High levels of security, including CCTV and controlled access
- Excellent fitness and sports facilities
- High quality catering facilities, able to provide a wide variety of healthy meal options which meet the needs of all students

In addition, provision of preparation areas and faculty bases will ensure that all staff have the very best facilities to support the delivery of quality education. The excellent standard of building and recreational areas will reflect the College's high aspirations and commitment to see the Academy flourish.

What happens next?

The College Board of Governors has approved in principle the development of up to two Academies. Our view is that the next stage is for initial discussions to take place with the relevant school's Governing Body, Head teachers and senior staff, Parents and Student representatives with a view to agreeing an Expression of Interest.

An Expression of Interest will enable all parties to engage in a Feasibility Study to look in detail at the issues relating to the creation of an Academy. Central Government will also provide funding to enable detailed local consultation to take place and to draw up plans for the proposed Academy. It is only at the successful completion of this stage that a binding 'Funding Agreement' will be signed between all parties which will detail the essential characteristics of the Academy.

Chris Perkins
Chair of Governors

David Croll
Principal

22 October 2007