



Co-operative schools – Making a difference

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Foreword

“We know that involving the community in the governance of schools can have a huge impact on standards. For example, the expertise of businesses, universities, colleges, voluntary organisations, charities and mutual organisations can help strengthen both the school’s curriculum and its strategic leadership helping to raise standards and offering more opportunities for pupils. Involving parents, community groups, pupils and staff means ensuring that those directly engaged with a school are best placed to make

decisions that don’t just benefit the school but also the wider local community”.

“I want to see more parents and communities actively involved in schools, and schools based on the principles of social enterprise and co-operation are an ideal way of doing this. That’s why we launched our co-operative Trust school pilot in September last year that will involve 100 schools and why we’re encouraging more partners like The Co-operative Group to sponsor Academies.”



A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'E' followed by a 'B' and a 'S'.

Ed Balls MP

Secretary of State for Children,
Schools and Families

The Children's Plan

In 2007, the Department for Children, Schools and Families launched 'The Children's Plan' which aims to make England the best place in the world for children and young people to grow up by putting their needs at the centre of everything the Department does.

Schools play a key role in making this plan a reality. By being at the heart of Children's Trusts, they will help drive the provision of services for children, families and the wider community. In addition, by building relationships with a wide range of partners such as other schools, businesses, universities, further education institutions and charities, these '21st Century schools' will be able to harness the expertise of their partners to offer personalised learning, raise attainment and ensure that every child has the chance to reach its potential.

Collaborative models like Trust schools, Academies and specialist schools provide schools with a framework through which they can cement their relationships

with these partners and it's here that mutual organisations and co-operative values can play an important role.

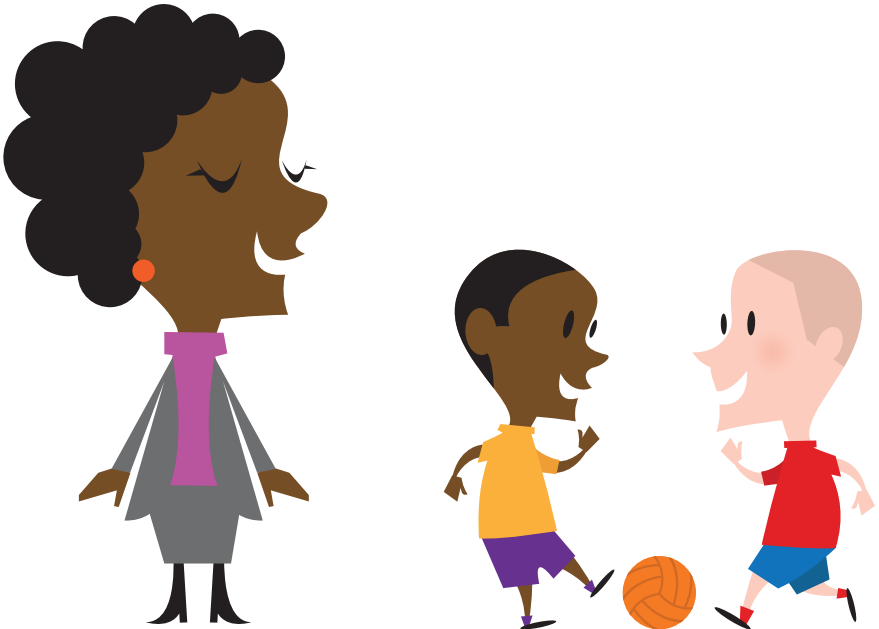
What are co-operative values?

Co-operatives the world over share the values of self help, self responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and community solidarity, and in the UK all types of co-operative enterprises are increasingly keen to work with schools to ensure that young people have the skills and experience they need for the workplace and to show that an ethical approach to business works. They are also keen to show that through the adoption of these values, children and young people can gain a better understanding of their role as citizens and how they can help build a fairer society.

How can co-operative values help schools improve standards?

Co-operative values can help schools raise standards in a variety of ways including through developing partnerships, helping to engage the local community in the strategic direction of schools, and strengthening the curriculum.

There are currently three formal ways that schools can embed a social enterprise ethos into their schools; Trust schools, specialist schools and Academies sponsored by partners.



Co-operative school models

Trust schools

Trust schools are maintained schools supported by a charitable foundation (popularly known as a Trust) which appoints some of the governors. The Trust involves one or more partners and may include, for example, a local college, university, business, and voluntary or community organisation.

Acquiring a Trust can help schools build long term, sustainable relationships with partners and, using their experience and expertise, strengthen leadership and governance to help raise standards.

Any maintained school can become a Trust school¹ and the decision to adopt Trust status is taken by the governing body. However a Trust school could also be proposed in a school competition for a new school or as a replacement for an existing school. In such cases, the Trust partners take the lead in shaping the proposals and the vision for

the school and the local authority will usually decide the proposals. There is a guarantee of a site and of funding for the successful bidder in the competition. Trust status is also one of the structural solutions proposed for low performing schools by the school improvement programme 'National Challenge'.

What is a co-operative Trust school?

The Trust school model has been designed to be very flexible, ensuring that schools and their governing bodies can build a Trust that meets their specific needs. For example, the Co-operative College has adapted this model to embed co-operative values and principles into schools that they are working with. These include open membership, equal democratic participation (one member, one vote) and a clear line of accountability from those

1. Although this is more complex where the school already has a Trust or foundation (as is the case with voluntary schools).

who manage the schools to those that use the school and its extended services. Importantly this offers schools the opportunity to involve the wider community in the running of the school, including local people, businesses, voluntary groups, charities, parents, pupils and staff through membership of a “Council” or “Forum”. The “Council” appoints trustees to the Trust which, in turn, appoints governors to the governing body of the school.

The Council plays a pivotal role in delivering the Trust’s objectives in accordance with the core co-operative values of self help, self responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity.

For example, The Vale Trust, which was established by Reddish Vale Technology College, has a Forum that includes a wide range of interested groups or ‘constituencies’ including:

- Learner constituency which is open to pupils.
- Parent/Carer constituency.
- Staff constituency.
- Local community constituency which is open to any person who lives and works in the area with an interest in education, training, employment and regeneration.

- Third sector constituency which is open to statutory, voluntary or charitable organisations with an interest in education, training, employment and regeneration.

“We are very pleased to be drawing upon the values and principles of the international co-operative movement to deliver a real mutual dividend in and across the North of Stockport. This is more than just one school’s development – it is about empowering the whole community towards self regeneration.”

**Jenny Campbell,
headteacher, Reddish Vale
Technology College**

A further 30 co-operative Trust school projects involving around 60 schools are currently underway and are expected to become Trust schools in 2009.



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Nab Wood School

Nab Wood School, a community comprehensive specialising in humanities, is situated in Bingley but serves about 1,000 students from Bradford city centre. Around 70% of the students are from a Pakistani background. The school has a culture that encourages higher educational aspirations whilst providing for a higher than average number of students with special educational needs.

The key aim of the Trust is to work to support the advancement of education and training across the community, ensuring young people have access to appropriate and personalised courses that meet their needs and that extend opportunities. The Co-operative Trust model provides a vehicle for community involvement which is a key feature of the school's improvement plan. As part of the BSF programme the building will be replaced with a new modern design. The co-operative model facilitates the involvement of stakeholders in the development of the design of a school building for the use of the students and the community. The schools partners include Suma Wholefoods, a local co-operative and Bradford University. Working with Suma will provide students with the opportunity to experience work-based learning in a business setting. Bradford University will support the school in raising the aspirations of students and provide a broader variety of educational experiences.

“Our students want to achieve and we feel that as a Trust school we can provide a broader range of learning opportunities for them,” says headteacher Elaine Shoesmith. “We need to bridge the gap between the school and its community and feel that the co-operative model for trust schools will help us to do that. Our parent and carers want to become involved with the school but need more opportunities to do so and feel that their opinions are valued.”

Nab Wood is in the final consultation stages and is expected to become a co-operative Trust school later this year.

How is a co-operative Trust school set up?

Becoming a co-operative Trust school requires a formal process that is undertaken by the governing body of the school. Schools may receive support from the Trust & Foundation Schools Partnership (TFSP) to go through this process if they submit an Expression of Interest to the TFSP which is then approved by the Department. An EOI application does not form part of the statutory process and approval to join the supported Trust schools programme does not constitute approval to become a Trust school – that is a decision which is taken locally after completion of the necessary statutory process by the governing body. That process takes around a year and has five stages:

Stage 1

Decide who to work with and how

The school's governing body will meet to explore questions like: What benefits will this bring to the school? Who would the Trust partners be and which partners can help the school build a co-operative ethos? The TFSP, along with the

Co-operative College, can help schools firm up those plans and find potential partners. (see back page for contact details).

Stage 2

Consultation

It's important that schools canvass the opinion of all those who could be affected by the school's change of status. The consultation stage is the turn of parents, staff, trade unions and the local community to give their views on the school's Trust plans. DCSF recommends a four to six week consultation period during term time.

Stage 3

Publish statutory proposals and invite representations

The school publishes formal proposals, which include specific details on the Trust. It must post notices in public places, so all the school's stakeholders are able to express their views. If the Trust plans to appoint the majority of governors, proposals will also include information on how a Parent Council would be set up. The period of representation must run for four weeks. Any objections or comments

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must be addressed to the governing body within the four week period².

Stage 4

Consider representations and decide whether to acquire the Trust

Proposals must be determined – and it is the school’s governing body (if the proposals have not been referred to the Adjudicator during the period for representations), that makes the decision on whether to proceed after taking on board the views and opinions of stakeholders. The decision must be made within six months of publishing proposals.

Stage 5

Implementation

Once the governing body of the school has decided to become a Trust school, the school’s land and buildings are transferred to the Trust for it to hold on the school’s behalf and the governing body

is reconstituted. Implementation begins as soon as the decision has been reached.

Further information on all stages of the process can be found in the Trust Schools Toolkit at www.trustandfoundationschools.org.uk/governors/resources_and_publications.aspx

The Department is keen to explore how a co-operative Trust can help schools engage with the wider community. In September last year, the Department announced a pilot co-operative Trust school programme involving 100 schools. The co-operative Trust pilot will entail additional funding of up to £5,000 made available to each school seeking to acquire this model to fund the necessary consultancy support for training³.

For more information on co-operative Trusts visit www.trustandfoundationschools.org.uk and the section on co-operative trusts on www.school.coop

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2. If the local authority has concerns that the governing body has failed to consult adequately or not taken account of the consultation or if the LA has concerns that the Trust will have a negative impact on standards at the school, then it may refer proposals to the Schools Adjudicator who will decide the proposals rather than the governing body. Any referral must be made during the 4 week representation period.
 3. Any individual or organisation supporting the co-operative Trust model will be considered for the pilot if they can demonstrate the ability to deliver/ experience of running membership models.

Reddish Vale Co-operative Trust

Reddish Vale Technology College was the first school in England to become a co-operative Trust school, with the Reddish Vale Co-operative Trust established in March 2008.

Reddish Vale is a large secondary school, with 1,320 learners. The school's most recent Ofsted Report in 2007 described the school as good with some aspects, such as provision for care, guidance and support, outstanding.

Phil Arnold, Director of School Improvement, emphasised how the Trust was enabling the school to seize new opportunities:

"The co-operative Trust will give us a stable platform on which to build partnerships and continue to develop to meet the changing needs of our local communities."

"Working with our partners we are keen to pursue new capital funding to complement our BSF plans and seek ways to engage young people through social enterprise. The 'My Place' programme, for example, has offered young people hands-on opportunities to develop and manage a youth co-operative. They have come together through membership of the Trust to bid to deliver sport, leisure, information, advice and guidance, and a safe place to be in the heart of their community. Their bid "Our Space" has a co-operative enterprise – run by young people for young people – as its centrepiece."

Jenny Campbell, head teacher at Reddish Vale Technology College, is keen to impress that the development and implementation of the Trust is the next natural stage on the journey of the school. The Trust has offered not only the school but a wide range of partners and stakeholders a way in which to continue to drive up standards and create a transformational platform to address wider issues of education, training, employability and regeneration.

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Dale Stafford the Chair of trustees points out that the co-operative Trust model provides a sustainable solution far beyond the current partnership and collaborative structures.

“Sustainability is provided through the membership and co-ownership of the physical environment. The school’s community has a continual throughput of potential new members and a strong connection within the community to bring stakeholder groups together at a grassroots level. Drawing on this we are able to grow support and capacity in and across the community for regeneration and transformation. Co-operatives have been doing this for over 150 years and they show a great potential for further growth in these globally challenging times.”

Establishing a new co-operative Trust school

Proposals for a new school (including those replacing existing schools) are normally published in response to a local authority invitation to bid in a competition (although proposals may also be published outside a competition with the consent of the Secretary of State). The Trust partners, which could include social enterprise or co-operative organisations, would take the lead in putting together the proposal and if it won the competition, then the new school would be established as a co-operative Trust school from the

start, with a site provided by the local authority, and public funding for the school.

What happens in a competition?

When an LA identifies a need for a new school they must first advertise this need and invite proposals from interested parties. Proposers then have four months to prepare bids and send these bids to the LA. During this four month period they can apply for consultancy support from the Department to help prepare their bid. The LA must then publish a second notice which summarises all the proposals received and any proposals it wishes

to make itself, and gives details of where any representations on the proposals may be sent. The final decision is taken by the LA or schools adjudicator. An LA will not be able to decide the outcome of a new school competition where they are either the proposers of a new school or have a role in any Trust that proposes a new school. In this case, the outcome will be decided by the independent Schools Adjudicator.

The six stage school competition process

1. **Consultation** – A consultation is held with all interested parties. No time period is specified however DCSF recommend a minimum of six weeks.
2. **First notice** – This invites proposals to establish the new school which is then followed by a four month period for proposals to be submitted.
3. **Second notice** – This notice provides details of all the new school proposals received and which are published within three weeks of the deadline for proposals being received.
4. **Representations** – This allows comments and objections from the public and interested stakeholders to be submitted within six weeks of publication of the proposals.
5. **Decision** – The decision is taken by the LA unless it has entered proposals or is involved in any Trust proposals, in which case the decision is taken by the Schools Adjudicator. If the LA do not decide the proposals within two months, they will be decided by the Adjudicator in any case.
6. **Implementation** – If the proposals are approved, it will be for the proposers to implement them in the form in which they were approved and open the school on the approved implementation date (although if necessary the proposers can apply for modification of these details, including the implementation date).

For more information on the school competitions process visit www.dcsf.gov.uk/schoolorg/

For an overview of live competitions visit www.dcsf.gov.uk/schoolscommissioner/current-competitions.shtml

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Upper Shirley High

Upper Shirley High is an oversubscribed co-ed secondary school with 600 students. Ofsted describes the school population as 'diverse' with 'higher than average student numbers who speak English as an additional language. It also has a higher than average proportion of students with learning difficulties and or/disabilities'.

From a low point in 2005 when the school was placed in special measures, the local community disengaged from the school and student admissions fell from 140 to 80, the new principal, Cassie Ellins has worked hard to raise standards and re-engage with the community. The school was removed from special measures after three terms and was oversubscribed in 2008 when Ofsted rated the extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community as 'outstanding'.

Part of the key to transformation was through re-engaging the local community, especially in the steps towards becoming a co-ed school. Central to this was working with the local infant and junior schools, sixth form college and special school. The Upper Shirley learning Community is using the Trust mechanism to cement these partnerships.

Cassie Ellins, Principal, commented:

"By becoming a co-operative trust we will build on the already improving relationships with all our stakeholders. A co-operative trust allows a more formal mechanism for consultation and engagement driven by the co-operative values but centred in the community. This will assist the school in continuing to raise standards and is vital for the planned rebuild of the school under the Building Schools for the Future programme. The new Upper Shirley High really will be at the heard of our community."

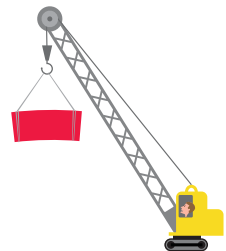
Co-operative Specialist Schools

The Specialist Schools Programme aims to drive up standards and wider school improvement by ensuring that developments in the specialist subjects are used to support and reinforce high quality teaching and learning in other areas of the curriculum. It also aims to promote partnership working and productive collaboration between local schools and colleges and develop networks for specialist schools to share their expertise and resources.

Specialist schools are outward-facing and, as such, are committed to the education and welfare of all children and young people and to developing the learning of the whole community. As part of their community dimension requirements, specialist schools work with partner schools and a wide range of individuals, agencies and organisations including parents, families, adults with basic and other skills and learning needs, local businesses/employers, the voluntary/third sector, and regeneration bodies.

Any maintained secondary school and maintained and non-maintained special schools in England can apply to become a specialist school.

As part of the initial application process most schools need to raise £50,000 sponsorship from groups like employers, voluntary groups, and PTAs. Successful schools then receive a one-off £100,000 capital grant to add to their sponsorship funds. In addition to this, although subject to a few exceptions/conditions, schools receive a recurrent annual grant of £129 per pupil for as long as they retain their specialism. Schools need to demonstrate they that continue to meet the requirements of the programme periodically – currently each time they are subject to an Ofsted section 5 inspection.



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“For us, it’s about working with local partners with a national and international significance that have the right values at their core – working in partnership with the co-operative movement gives us that.”

**Steve Wall, headteacher,
Sutherland Business and
Enterprise College**

For more information visit
**[www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/
specialistschools](http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/specialistschools)**

Sutherland Business and Enterprise College

Sutherland Business and Enterprise College in Telford is a small but growing secondary school, with just over 520 pupils. The school is in a challenging area and has a higher proportion of pupils with learning difficulties than the national average.

Ofsted describe Sutherland as “satisfactory and improving, and with a determination to eliminate weak teaching and provide professional development for the school”. In 2007 the school successfully applied to become a Specialist Business and Enterprise College, with Midcounties Co-operative Society as its main sponsor and partner. It is now an active participant in the network of co-operative Business and Enterprise Colleges and will become the first Trust school in Shropshire based on co-operative values, on 1 May 2009. Headteacher Steve Wall is currently encouraging a cluster of at least eight schools, possibly more, to become involved in a co-operative Trust. He says: “I am confident that the Trust will enable us to embed the co-operative values driven approach that we have adopted. We see the Trust as providing a method to improve community engagement and cohesion so that the quality of life for our all our students and our learning community improves. As teachers we come into this profession to change people’s lives. As head I have the best job in the world, I develop the conscience of the future generation. The ethics and values of the co-operative movement will help create young people who will meet the challenges of global warming, recession and the world as one family.”

The school's vision of the Trust is a learning community with shared values and principles. "Our Co-operative Trust will go beyond schools into the community to give the greatest possible opportunities for success to all our stakeholders... For us, it's about working with local partners with a national and international significance that have the right values at their core – working in partnership with the co-operative movement gives us that."

Just recently the school hosted a visit from an Italian co-operative school that involved 30 Italian students and three Italian staff visiting the school for a two week stay where students and teachers practiced their skills of global co-operation. This is a part of a wider aim of the school to encourage global citizenship through local, national and international community cohesion.



Co-operative Academies

Academies are all-ability state funded schools which are sponsored by organisations from a wide range of backgrounds, including universities and colleges, educational Trusts, charities, the business sector and faith communities. Sponsors establish a charitable Trust which appoints the majority of governors to the Academy's governing body.

Academies tend to be established in areas of low educational attainment and opportunity. Most Academies replace existing weak or underperforming schools, while others are brand new schools in areas which need extra school places which in some cases have been established as a result of a school competition.

There are currently two planned co-operative Academies. What makes these schools different from other Academies is that the ethos and curriculum of the Academy are focused on Co-operative values.

For example, The Co-operative Academy of Manchester, due to

open in 2010 and sponsored by the Co-operative Group, aims to inspire pupils to have an enterprising outlook and show how they can use these skills in the wider community. Finance and business expertise will be provided by the Co-operative Group's businesses, working in collaboration with other financial and professional services in Manchester and beyond. The aim is that the Academy will be a national centre of excellence for finance and business drawing upon best practice from around the world and will inspire and encourage other schools regionally, nationally and globally. As a key part of the learning community of Manchester, the Academy will work collaboratively with the City, its cluster of schools, the other Academies and their sponsors, schools in Manchester, Children's Services providers, parents, carers, governors and other stakeholders.

"The co-operative Academies will form part of the national network of co-operative business and

enterprise colleges and co-operative Trusts, to share good practice, to develop co-operative ways of working, and to provide wider opportunities for learners in all co-operative schools.”

Len Wardle, Chair of the Co-operative Group

The strength of the Academies programme is the way in which it brings external partners into schools in a genuine partnership model. As the Department moves towards its target of opening 400

Academies it is keen to encourage more organisations from the charity, voluntary social enterprise and co-operative sectors to work alongside the universities, high performing state and independent schools, faith and business organisations already involved in Academies. There is a great opportunity to form dynamic partnerships to run schools in some of the most deprived areas in the country.

For more details on Academies visit www.ssatrust.org.uk

Co-operative Academies

The Co-operative is sponsoring two Academies, one in Manchester and one in Stoke-on-Trent. Both are set to open in 2010. Co-operative Financial Services (CFS) is leading on the Academy in Manchester, with its specialism being in finance and business, and Co-operative Travel is leading on the Academy in Stoke-on-Trent, with its specialism being in business, maths and ICT. Both Academies face significant challenges in areas of high social deprivation and unemployment.

Peter Marks, Chief Executive of the Co-operative Group says:

“We are proud to be setting up two co-operative Academies, in Manchester and Stoke-on-Trent. These Academies will use our co-operative ethos and co-operative businesses to inspire the young people in them. The Academies will be at the heart of their communities, providing access to learning, creativity and skills for all their learners.”

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The vision for both Academies is that they use their specialism to deliver world class skills for work, as well as delivering excellence in education. Business expertise will be provided by CFS and Co-operative Travel to give learners the opportunities to experience the relevant business and to try out the skills they learn in the classroom.

David Anderson, Chief Executive of CFS says:

“Co-operative Financial Services is developing the Co-operative Academy of Manchester as part of the Co-operative Group’s Academy programme. Through its specialism of Finance and Business we will provide all the Academy learners with an opportunity to gain the skills they need for the world of work. We will also show through our own ethical approach to business, that young people can be both successful learners and good citizens.”

Learners will develop key skills through the acquisition of vocational knowledge, skills and understanding through sampling a range of learning and work contexts. The aim is for young people to develop their motivation, confidence and personal effectiveness along with using the opportunities available to learn and develop their own individual capability and capacity.

Using the values of equality and equity every learner will be given the opportunity to engage with the learning and development offered. Learners will not just participate in the process of learning but will have a say in the decision making process, they will understand how to enable change and be democratically engaged at all levels of the Academies. The Academies will operate in a way that is socially responsible and the staff, students and governors will set the ethical policy of the school, which will influence teaching and learning, procurement, behaviour and processes.

Your questions answered

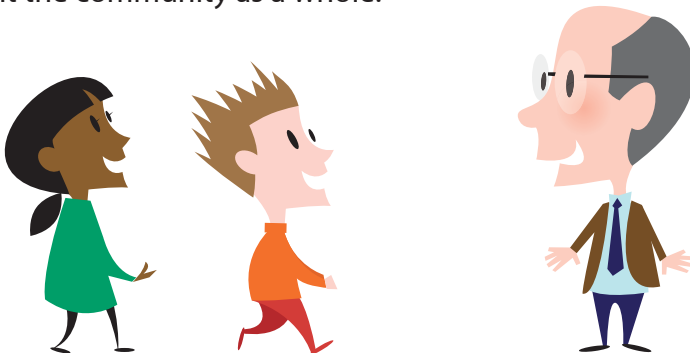
Why is the government supporting co-operative school models?

At their heart, Trust schools have governance models that encourage sustainable relationships with external partners that can bring renewed drive and expertise to the school helping to raise standards.

A Co-operative Trust provides schools with a unique opportunity to build a school ethos around co-operative values helping to create more opportunities for pupils and offering the community a way of getting involved in the running of the school ensuring that decisions made by the school benefit the community as a whole.

How is the DCSF supporting schools that want to become co-operative Trust schools?

Schools that join the Trust Schools Programme are currently eligible to receive up to £10,000 from Government to support the costs of setting up a Trust. Those wishing to adopt the co-operative model will now be able to recoup up to £5,000 extra to engage consultants to assist in developing this innovative model. Advice and guidance is available from the Department's Trust school delivery partner, the Trust and Foundation School Partnership (see back page for more details).



Will the governing body and headteacher have less control in running the schools?

There will be no reduction in the role and responsibilities of the governing body of Trust schools. Headteachers will retain their responsibility for the day to day running of their schools.

Does Trust status mean that schools are selective?

Trust schools are subject to the same rules as foundation schools. This means that they set their own admissions arrangements, but they will have to act in accordance with the School Admissions Code and will not be allowed to introduce selection by ability. Trust schools will play their full part in taking hard to place pupils, having fair admission, and working with other schools.

What difference will being a Trust school make to the school's funding?

A Trust school will continue to receive its funding from the local authority on the same basis as other local schools – and funding will be delegated to the governing body, not the Trust. There will be no additional funding from the local authority on the basis that a school is a Trust school, and there is no expectation that the Trust will provide the school with additional funding (although of course they will be free to do so if they choose).



Want to learn more about setting up a co-operative school?

Trust schools

For more information on setting up a co-operative Trust school visit www.trustandfoundationschools.org.uk

www.school.coop

Academies

For more information on co-operative academies visit www.ssatrust.org.uk

Specialist schools

For more information on specialist schools visit www.ssatrust.org.uk

For examples of the work developed with the co-operative network of business and enterprise colleges visit www.school.coop

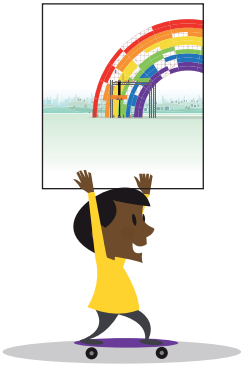
For more information on the Co-operative College visit www.co-op.ac.uk

New school competitions

For more information on new school competitions and the support available visit www.dcsf.gov.uk/schoolorg/ and www.dcsf.gov.uk/schoolscommissioner/current-competitions.shtml



A commitment from
The Children's Plan



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