

Fulfilling potential

The business role in education



Foreword

Business is a major stakeholder in education. We provide young people with experiences of the world of work through work experience placements, talk to schools about the skills needed in the modern workplace and bring business experience to school leadership as governors. In turn, businesses rely on schools and colleges to enable young people to develop the skills, knowledge and attitude needed in today's workplace.

But look again at the education sector and there's another role for businesses – as a partner and provider of education services helping transform underperforming schools and local education authorities, and re-engaging young people who are not in education or training with the world of learning. As the case studies in this report show, the private and third sector can be used to support school leadership, change management and innovative teaching practice to achieve improvements in outcomes which benefit young people, their families, schools and local communities.

To date this involvement has been focused on turning around failing schools or struggling education authorities. Progress has been made and the number of schools where less than 30% of pupils get five good GCSEs including English and maths has fallen to 247 compared to 439 last year.

But significant challenges remain – too many school leavers leave education without the skills, knowledge and attitude to work employers are looking for. And too many of these young people are being let down by persistent underperformance of the education system through attending failing or coasting schools. The link between a disadvantaged background and poor educational achievement remains too clear.

The coalition government has ambitious plans to rejuvenate education by extending the academies programme, opening the way for parents and teachers to set up their own schools and to reform the curriculum. Now is the time to promote new and innovative means of tackling weaknesses in the education system – moving forward with business as a stakeholder and committed partner. Government must ensure that the full range of expertise and capacity that exists within the private sector and third sectors is utilised to improve value for money and drive through innovation and change. Business is ready to play its part.

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Overview

This report sets out a clear statement of business priorities for schools and the case for action. It also identifies the role the private and third sectors have played in tackling failure through bringing in fresh ideas, best practice and value for money.

The primary goal of the education system must be to prepare young people for leading successful and fulfilling lives. Employers do not expect schools to churn out job-ready students. But they do expect young people to have the skills, capability and attitude necessary to succeed in the modern workplace.

The UK's schools, working with business as a committed stakeholder and partner, must evolve and adapt alongside a world of work increasingly characterised by change, greater competition and flexibility, equipping young people with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed. For most young people, it is the transferable skills they develop at school and build on into adulthood that will determine their success and enable them to develop technical competence in a range of different jobs throughout their lives.

Employers are clear that they look to the education system to develop confident, motivated young people, with the attitude, knowledge and skills to succeed in life and in the world of work. In particular, they want young people to have:

- **A strong base of literacy, numeracy and IT skills**
- **The broad set of employability skills (teamworking, problem-solving, communication, business and customer awareness, self-management) necessary for all jobs**
- **A strong grounding in science and maths, with the most capable encouraged to study these vital subjects further**
- **Access to a range of learning options – academic, vocational and applied (eg sector-specific diplomas) – with appropriate information, advice and guidance**
- **Qualifications that are recognised, understood and valued by business.**

It is against these priorities that business will judge the performance of the education system and any reforms.

Investment in education has been significant over the past decade – and there have been many areas where real progress has been made. But there remain areas of concern, where the educational outcomes are simply not good enough if the UK is to continue to be globally competitive and socially cohesive. The decade of spending on education has not delivered the returns expected or needed. Neither has it delivered significant change in the systems and structures which might drive future improvement. Now is the time to promote new and innovative

means of tackling weaknesses in the education system – whether that is a result of poor or coasting school performance or the attainment gap between the rich and less advantaged. Schools and colleges cannot, of course, be expected to solve all of society's problems – but the level of a person's education is a major determinant of future employment prospects. No young person in the UK should be denied the opportunity of a high-class education – but too many schools are failing and too many pupils do not fulfil their potential.

Change is possible. More of the same will not be effective. Many schools and local authorities have improved their performance but many have not and the UK can ill-afford, from an economic and social perspective, to tolerate failure or complacency. Innovative new approaches and independent providers have worked effectively with schools and local authorities: this good practice should now be extended.

Achieving the outcomes the UK needs requires a clear focus on tackling failure and complacency wherever they exist, with schools permitted the autonomy to innovate and respond to local challenges. It is on these underperforming areas of our education system that the government must focus.

Summary of recommendations

Government has embarked on an ambitious programme of reform. Business is clear that any reforms must enable young people to develop and achieve:

- A strong base of literacy, numeracy and IT skills
- The broad set of employability skills (team working, problem-solving, communication, business and customer awareness, self-management) necessary for all jobs
- A strong grounding in science and maths, with the most capable encouraged to study these vital subjects further
- Access to a range of learning options – academic, vocational and applied (eg sector-specific diplomas) – with appropriate information, advice and guidance
- Qualifications that are recognised, understood and valued by business.

For school reforms to deliver improvements in educational outcomes it is essential that:

- New academies and free schools maintain their freedom to innovate – by allowing them to choose appropriate qualifications, apply proven innovative teaching techniques and maintain their independence
- The development of federations and chains of schools is supported by robust quality assurance processes. This will enable the engagement of a range of organisations in the development of chains of schools driving up outcomes through systems leadership and efficiencies
- The full range of expertise and capacity that exists within the private sector and third sector is utilised to improve value for money and drive through innovation and change. Government must open up services to competition and in the case of free schools allow profit-making companies to be involved in due course
- The Department for Education should set out a clear market strategy for educational services and ensure schools and academies are supported to engage with private providers of support and improvement services.



1 Improving education – for life and work

Schools can be places where young people are able to develop into rounded individuals, where their career and life options are broadened and enhanced through high quality teaching, in schools that are well led and managed. They should not be institutions that train students to undertake particular jobs – this is the role and responsibility of their future employers.

Young people's careers will be characterised by change, flexibility and lifelong learning. Business needs its current and future workforce to have the transferable skills and attitudes necessary to succeed in this environment, underpinning the development of job-specific and technical skills.

Business has a keen interest in improving education

Business is an important stakeholder in the education system and has a strong interest in breaking the cycle of under-achievement in which some young people are trapped. That is not just because of its requirement for a growing pool of skilled employees, critically important though this is. The direct economic cost of youth unemployment is substantial – the Prince's Trust has put the figure at £4.7bn a year after taking into account productivity loss and the cost of benefits. In addition, healthy businesses need healthy communities in which to operate. Prolonged periods of unemployment can have seriously adverse impacts on the lives of young people, which can be measured in terms of health, crime and strained social cohesion.

With the world of work changing so rapidly, schools educate children for a future that is difficult to predict. Business is confident that it will increasingly need employees with a positive attitude to learning, with transferable skills and with a good grounding in science and maths. Stronger and wider partnership working between all parts of the education system and employers will ensure schools have access to the latest ideas, and pupils will have a clearer understanding of the skills needed to succeed in working life and understand the relevance of their time at school to their adult lives.

It is not business' role to teach. But business engagement in schools can be a powerful tool in helping to raise achievement through making clear the relevance of the skills and knowledge learnt at school to the workplace and to ensure more young people leave the education system with the skills needed for success in their working lives. This can be achieved through a variety of means – the government should provide an effective framework to enable progress to be made:

- Providing high quality work experience placements, mentoring and workplace visits for pupils
- Greater involvement of employers as school governors, bringing their business expertise to the education sector and helping to run more effective schools
- Sponsoring academies and partnering with trusts, utilising the vast and virtually untapped reservoir of potential of the business community to inform the direction and emphasis of teaching, leadership and the curriculum in schools
- Utilising private and third sector expertise to deliver vital services – from running whole schools and local education authorities, to providing bespoke solutions.

Greater innovation and diversity of provision is needed

It is undoubtedly the case that the previous government saw investment in education as its major priority. Government spending on education rose to over £60bn a year, and is now approximately £6,000 per pupil in England. Total spending on education inputs increased by over 120% (in current prices) between 1996 and 2008.¹

This increased investment has improved outcomes:

- GCSE and A-level attainment has risen year-on-year for the past two decades
- Science uptake at GCSE and A-level has improved
- The attainment gap between those pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) and other children also narrowed
- The brightest students are among the best in the world according to the OECD's most recent PISA study.

A range of intervention strategies has sought to address educational underachievement at all levels – including Sure Start in early years, literacy and numeracy strategies in primary schools, the National Challenge initiatives and the 14-19 strategy. There has been some impact on results:

- 51% of pupils in the maintained sector got five or more A*-C GCSEs including English and maths – above the trajectory to meet the government's target of 53% by 2011
- 50% of pupils in all schools got five or more A*-C GCSEs including English and maths – up 2.2 percentage points on last year and 13.9 percentage points since 1997
- The number of National Challenge schools – where fewer than 30% of pupils get five good GCSEs including English and maths – has fallen to 247 compared to 439 last year and around 1,600 in 1997, with the rate of improvement speeding up year-on-year.

The academy programme – with over 200 opened since it began – has also been broadly successful in turning around failing schools.

But digging deeper, past the headline Key stage, GCSE and A-level results, reveals a more complex and concerning picture of the UK's education system. A school operating above the National Challenge threshold can still see the majority of its students leave without the qualifications needed to secure a prosperous future. Too many school leavers exit education without the skills, knowledge and attitude to work that employers are looking for. And too many of these young people are being let down by persistent underperformance of the education system – whether through attending failing or coasting schools, or through the misfortune of coming from a financially disadvantaged background.

Many employers remain dissatisfied with the performance of the education system – with real concerns over school leavers' literacy and numeracy, the numbers studying science and maths in depth and young people's ability to adapt to and succeed within the world of work and how classroom learning relates and is relevant to life outside the school gates. Indeed, despite the progress made:

- **There is a long tail of educational underachievement**
 - half of all 16 year-olds do not achieve at least a grade C in GCSE maths and English
 - the UK has the third highest proportion of 16-24 year-olds not in education, employment or training (nearly one in five) in the OECD. 16% of young people leave education in this country without any qualifications, compared to the OECD average of 14%
- use of English and basic numeracy are key areas of concern, with 38% and 31% of employers respectively saying they are dissatisfied with levels of attainment.
- **Science provision in schools is not good enough to meet tomorrow's demand for a scientifically literate population and STEM-skilled individuals** – 41% of young people achieve at least level 6 at Key stage 3 in science, indicating they are capable of further study – but only 15% study three sciences as separate GCSEs, and only 9% of pupils in state schools do so
- **Family income remains a major determinant of success at school** – in the 10% of England where there is the most deprivation, half of all secondary schools fail to achieve the benchmark of a non-failing school – one where at least 30% of pupils get five or more good GCSEs. In the most prosperous 10% of England, by contrast, only 3% of schools miss this benchmark. And there are major challenges with of pupils on free school meals underachieving are in schools where average results are good
- **247 secondary schools are still failing by the government's own benchmark**, and 49% of pupils at age 16 have failed to gain 5 GCSE passes at grades A-C including English and maths
- **Many secondary schools have been identified as coasting – delivering GCSE attainment in excess of the 30% floor, but failing to deliver acceptable progress from key stage 2 to key stage 4.** In 2008 the DCSF asked local authorities to name coasting schools and identified the key causes of lack of progress as a 'lack of sufficient accountability and challenge' and a 'lack of focused awareness and attention', raising significant questions over the quality of leadership and management and the effectiveness of accountability systems²
- **The development of employability skills is peripheral in many secondary schools.** Young people are leaving school and college with serious shortfalls in their employability skills. Over half of employers (57%) are finding weaknesses in school leavers' self-management skills – such as time management – and 68% believe they have inadequate business and customer awareness
- **Public investment is not used effectively** – the UK spends significantly more per head on education through the primary and secondary system than the OECD average, yet the outcomes by some important measures are well below par.

The significant levels of investment seen over the past decade will not be replicated over the course of this parliament, given the size of the deficit. Independent providers working in partnership with schools and local authorities have delivered real improvement through innovative approaches to raising attainment and more effective leadership and management. Our case studies show that:

- Private sector focus on system, scale and replicability will deliver improved value for money
- Outcome-focused commissioning arrangements, rather than input-driven procurements stimulate innovation and improve return on investment. It is important to consider how to do things differently, not just how to do the same things more efficiently
- Local authorities have an important role to play in monitoring the performance of service providers, and need to focus on becoming outstanding commissioners to ensure best outcomes and value for money.



2 Prioritising the outcomes that matter most

There are many areas where educational outcomes must improve. Government will need to prioritise and ensure this parliament sees significant progress on improving the outcomes set out in this report.

In this section, we recommend the areas that government should concentrate on as urgent priorities and the important challenges that must be addressed.

If young people are to have the best possible start in life and the best possible chance of finding sustainable employment, then addressing the following challenges must be a priority for government:

- **First, a continuing and unswerving focus on raising literacy and numeracy attainment** – this may be seen as ‘old hat’ and ‘done to death’, but it remains the area of improvement where the greatest returns are likely to be realised, in terms of individuals’ employability, future savings in benefits, and fewer employers needing to provide remedial training
- **Second, greater support for schools and pupils to develop vital employability skills** – greater integration of skills development into classroom learning, better partnerships between schools and employers, more effective, accessible and unbiased careers advice and guidance for all, not just the few
- **Third, improving the take-up, motivation and attainment of pupils in science and mathematics** – study of STEM subjects opens doors to a range of exciting jobs due to the skills it develops which are valued by all businesses, as well as the technical competencies needed for specific occupations.
- **Fourth, government must focus on failing and coasting schools, and tackle the attainment gap.** Poor literacy and numeracy tend to go hand in hand with other disadvantage – unemployment, poor health, lack of progress in work and lower earnings.

It is these four areas that business want prioritised. The private sector is willing and able to play its part – both in terms of ensuring young people better understand the relevance and importance of their education and the skills they develop to the world of work and in terms of providing high quality, cost effective solutions to addressing the delivery challenges that many of our schools and local authorities face.

Raising literacy and numeracy attainment – the basics of education

There can be no excuse for the huge numbers of school leavers who have failed to master the basics, after 11 years of formal education. The government must continue to prioritise improvements here.

From this September, new functional skills modules will be rolled out nationally. Currently available to diploma students, it is hoped that these new qualifications will provide all young people with the basic skills required to succeed. Recent Ofsted reports show that more must be done to ensure functional skills teaching and development is effective. Many teachers currently do not have the skills or knowledge to deliver the applied approach to literacy and numeracy that is needed.

The curriculum must have a distinct focus on literacy and numeracy. To enable this, the organisation of time and staffing, and the development of pedagogical practice should reflect what is now known and understood about how young people develop these basic skills.

Government must support schools to prioritise teaching and the application of literacy and numeracy:

- With more continuing professional development for teachers
- By dedicating appropriate time in the secondary curriculum to teach literacy and numeracy
- By focusing on teaching it, not just assessing ability
- By ensuring schools are accountable for their performance.

Supporting schools and pupils to develop vital employability skills and an understanding of the world of work

The importance of schooling must not be seen only through the lens of economic advancement. Education plays a much wider role than this, but preparing young people for adult working life must be, unapologetically, a major priority for our schools system. It is failing too many students in this regard. To be successful, young people must:

- Develop vital employability skills while at school and be able to articulate that they possess them to future employers
- Have access to high quality engagement with employers, both through work experience and more widely through effective school-business partnerships

“The development of employability skills should be integrated into young people’s learning”

- Be able to make subject choices and career decisions based on sound, comprehensive, unbiased and up-to-date information, advice and guidance.

Developing vital employability skills while at school

Developing a strong subject knowledge in the arts and sciences is vital in developing rounded individuals able to contribute effectively in society and the economy. But equally important is the possession of transferable, employability skills. Simply knowing facts will not be good enough. Indeed, as a result of the internet access to information has never been easier. Employers are looking for their employees to have the skills to analyse evidence, communicate with others and solve problems. If individuals do not have the skills to effectively exploit the knowledge they have, they are unlikely to be attractive to potential employers.

A positive attitude is the key foundation of employability.

This can be summed up as a ‘can-do’ approach, a readiness to take part and contribute, openness to new ideas and a drive to make those ideas happen. An attitude of this kind underpins the following seven-point framework:

- **Self-management** – readiness to accept responsibility, flexibility, resilience, self-starting, appropriate assertiveness, time management, readiness to improve own performance based on feedback/reflective learning
- **Teamworking** – respecting others, co-operating, negotiating/persuading, contributing to discussions, awareness of interdependence with others
- **Business and customer awareness** – basic understanding of the key drivers for business success – including the importance of innovation and taking calculated risks – and the need to provide customer satisfaction and build customer loyalty
- **Problem solving** – analysing facts and situations and applying creative thinking to develop appropriate solutions
- **Communication and literacy** – application of literacy, ability to produce clear, structured written work and oral literacy, including listening and questioning
- **Application of numeracy** – manipulation of numbers, general mathematical awareness and its application in practical contexts (eg measuring, weighing, estimating and applying formulae)
- **Application of information technology** – basic IT skills, including familiarity with word processing, spreadsheets, file management and use of internet search engines.

This is not a move against scholarship and mastery of subject disciplines, but rather a call for the development of these skills to be integrated into young people’s learning in combination with this more traditional form of education. The development of these skills and traditional academic learning are not mutually exclusive.

Too often the explicit development of employability skills is seen as a bolt-on activity rather than core to the learning process. Personal learning and thinking skills (PLTS) and economic wellbeing have been included into the curriculum – but the language used does not match that which employers understand and too often the development of these skills is seen as an add-on, rather than integrated into students’ learning.

A number of academies, third sector organisations and private companies have made significant progress in this area over recent years:

- Business and enterprise is a common specialism for new academies and has led to the creation of innovative educational visions that foster positive attitudes towards entrepreneurship and demand a clear focus on skills
- Recent plans for university technical colleges have received all-party support and will have at their heart the need to prepare young people for the world of work
- The Studio Schools Trust is supporting the creation of new schools (case study – page 10)
- Through a privately-funded research and development programme, EdisonLearning has created e2 – a new model for secondary schooling based around ‘the four modes of learning’ which balances the needs for the acquisition of basic skills and the exploration of academic subjects with the development of personal and employability skills, personal passions and interests
- Kunskapsskolan is developing a distinctive educational design, focused on a highly personalised approach to the curriculum, which will be introduced in the academies being sponsored by the company from September 2010. This model is based on the company’s experiences and successes as a school operator in Sweden where every student follows a long-term learning and attainment plan agreed between the student and the student’s personal tutor and parents. The learning plan is designed to ensure that every student achieves the very best results that they are capable of. Although focused on a modern, student-centred approach to teaching, Kunskapsskolan will follow the national curriculum, participate in national tests and conform to the national assessment system.

Studio Schools Trust

The Studio Schools Trust is working with a range of partners including employers and the country's leading educational agencies to develop Studio Schools, a new state school model for 14-19 year-olds of all abilities. The first wave of Studio Schools are opening across the country from September this year. Employability will run through all aspects of the curriculum. Working closely with local partners up and down the UK the Studio Schools Trust has pioneered a practical approach to learning specifically designed to ensure that young people develop these crucial skills. But more than that, in Studio Schools students will gain a meaningful insight into the working world through real work placements. Studio Schools will teach the national curriculum and will offer the same key qualifications as traditional schools. What makes them unique is not what is offered but how it is delivered. Studio Schools will take education out of a traditional classroom setting with students learning principally through enterprise themed projects in their local area.

Outcomes:

- Improved attainment – 100% of the students in the national Studio Schools field trial in Barnfield, which trialled key elements of the model, achieved 5 A*-C GCSEs. The students averaged 9 A*- C GCSEs or equivalent, significantly higher than the average for the academy they came from
- Improved attendance – the attendance rate for the pilot group in the Studio Schools field trial in Kirklees was 94.8%. This compared favourably to the 90.5% rate for the school as a whole. This is particularly significant given the fact that many of the students selected for the pilot had a history of disengagement and would have had an attendance record below the 90.5% rate for the school prior to the commencement of the pilot
- Successful completion of commissioned work – participants in the Kirklees field trial were required to complete challenging commissioned work for local employers. They completed all this on time, on budget, and to the satisfaction of the clients
- Employability skills – employers who participated in the field trials have reported that the students involved developed many of the key skills that their businesses need. These employers, like many others, have consistently raised concerns about the lack of key employability skills amongst school leavers
- Business engagement – a large number of employers from a wide range of sectors are participating in the first wave of Studio Schools.

High quality engagement with employers, through work experience and more widely through effective school-business partnerships

The work of the National Council for Educational Excellence (NCEE) has recommended a national framework for business-education partnerships and an aspiration that every school has a strong link with an employer. The CBI is a strong supporter of the work undertaken – business engagement should be integrated with all parts of the learning experience, not viewed as a bolt-on, 'nice to do' activity.

The NCEE's National Framework for Business-Education Partnership

Employers should support the delivery of a new National Framework for business education partnership so that every primary and secondary school and college should have an effective relationship with business. The National Framework defines where business can contribute most to raising the aspirations and achievements of young people, and covers:

- School leadership, including governance and teacher professional development
- Basic literacy, numeracy and life skills including knowledge of the world of work
- Science, technology, engineering and maths
- Enterprise education and employability skills.

The Institute for Education Business Excellence, the professional body for those working in the field of business-education partnerships, is helping to implement the NCEE recommendations.

Business engagement in education has also increased in recent years through the academy programme

Many companies and business people have sponsored academies and ensured the ethos and curriculum reflect the skills, knowledge and attitude students will need to succeed in the world of work.

Since the inception of the academy programme, sponsors have had the opportunity to address the systemic barriers to change and innovation. But despite these freedoms and flexibilities, few academies have challenged the accepted norms of the traditional UK secondary school model. Reasons for this resistance to change include:

- A reliance on the 'hero head' to bring about innovation and improvement, rather than a focus on the development of high-calibre system and scale, supported by school-wide leadership



- A lack of compelling research into educational system design
- An unwillingness to take risks in the light of current accountability structures.

If more businesses are to see value in getting involved in academy sponsorship, the government must address the inherent barriers to innovation in the programme at present – in particular it should:

- Focus increasingly on delivering improved outcomes for learners and value for money, and less on prescribing how these outcomes should be achieved
- Provide sponsors, particularly those seeking to transform learning in the most challenging contexts, with an appropriate window of opportunity to drive through change
- Ensure that potential sponsors, offering distinctive transferable capabilities from outside of the education sphere are not blocked from entering the market through a lack of direct educational track record.

Mentoring helping to engage young people

Nord Anglia Education is delivering the Backing Young Britain Mentoring programme on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions across England, Scotland and Wales. The purpose of the programme is to offer employment mentoring to young people who are aged 18-24 and claiming Jobseeker's Allowance.

Mentoring helps young people by increasing their understanding of the world of work and knowledge of particular industries or careers. Mentors come from private companies, the public sector and voluntary organisations. They work with young people on confidence building, addressing aspirations or interview advice. They may offer advice on what it's like to work in a profession, share their own experiences or suggest successful jobsearch approaches.

Young people appreciate the knowledge and guidance that experienced employees are able to share and often feel more inspired to succeed. Mentoring can have a lasting effect on the young person's career and their life.

Companies which have given support to the mentoring programme include Centrica, London Transport Museum, Royal Bank of Scotland, the Eden Project, Freemans Grattan Holdings and the NHS. Organisations benefit from training in mentoring for staff, promoting careers in their sector to young people, fulfilling corporate social responsibility goals and an increased understanding of what young people are looking for from their future careers and employers.

Feedback on the benefits of mentoring has been very positive from both mentors and mentees: "Through my two meetings with my mentor I have progressed more than I have in the past three months. She's given me such a lot – she's very professional and has really helped me to learn to sell myself in the job market. I'm sure that I can achieve my aims now."

"I am very pleased to say that [my mentee] texted me to say that he has found a job! I am so happy for him, and he told me that some of the tips I gave him helped with his application and interview. Great – proper 'job satisfaction'! I offered to keep in touch, and will be happy to help him again if he needs it."

Making subject choices and career decisions based on unbiased and up-to-date information, advice and guidance

A lack of information and effective guidance hinders young people – and those supporting them – in making the most effective decisions at the key transition points in their education. This not only carries a significant direct cost to the taxpayer, through wasted provision in the publicly-funded skills system, but also burdens employers with a heavy indirect cost, as a large proportion of young people leave education without the skills they need.

It is important that young people's training decisions are informed by the highest-quality careers advice at the key decision points in their education.

Business believes that careers advice for young people should be based on the following five principles:

1. **Careers information, advice and guidance should be an integral part of the school curriculum from year 7 onwards.** With the introduction of new 14-19 options, young people are being asked to make significant career-influencing decisions at an earlier age. It is also critical to 'switch on' students in key science disciplines ahead of subject choices at 14 and 16, to maintain the talent flow in STEM areas into HE and vocational training. Throughout the secondary curriculum, careers advice should be integrated with the teaching of enterprise and employability skills.
2. **High-quality information on the careers destinations different education and training choices should be made available to students.** Ahead of the key decision points in their education, students often lack adequate information on the employment-destination implications of different education and training choices. They should have access to appropriate labour market information to ensure they understand the employment/economic returns to different academic and vocational choices.

3. **This information needs to be supported by unbiased and personalised advice and guidance for all young people, delivered by properly-trained careers advisers and teachers.** Well-provisioned information is only as good as the advice that signposts students to it and guides them. It is essential that this advice is objective, and does not promote the value of academic options over vocational training routes.
4. **Involving employers is essential to supporting young people to make informed decisions about their future career options.** Work experience placements, ambassador schemes, workplace visits and mentoring programmes, when properly coordinated and well-delivered, have an enormous potential to raise students' aspirations, encourage academic achievement, and raise awareness of the different opportunities open to students.
5. **There should be a seamless transition between pre-19 and post-19 careers services** – so that resources are utilised most effectively and to ensure that no-one falls through the gaps after leaving school.

Improving student take-up, motivation and attainment in maths and science

The UK has long-standing strengths in the business sectors which need scientific, technical, engineering and maths graduates. It has a greater proportion of value-added arising from knowledge-intensive services than any other major OECD economy apart from the US, and it is among the best in the world in sectors as diverse as computer games development and low-carbon and environmental goods and services. These sectors rely on STEM skills.

Business is looking for a range of STEM-qualified employees to fill a variety of roles. The most brilliant graduates will become future scientific leaders, driving cutting edge innovation, drawing on advanced academic knowledge and depth of experience. Graduates with good scientific or engineering literacy, developed at the best universities in the UK, are also needed. They will have had good workplace experience, along with excellent laboratory and technical skills developed as part of their degree. Trained and technically qualified people are the third key group – enthused about science and technology, with the techniques at their fingertips. Many of these people will have had a vocational route into STEM careers supported by their employers, and can undertake a range of highly skilled functions across their organisations.

Too few students are studying – or feel confident in studying – science and mathematics at A-level or Scottish Highers. And scientific potential at the age of 14 is not being fully realised. Just over 41% of young people achieve at least a level 6 at Key stage 3, indicating they are capable of further study. But only a small minority go on to study GCSE triple science in England and Wales, which is the best preparation for A-level and further STEM study. Although all students study maths at GCSE level, maths at A-level accounts for just 9% of all entries in England and Wales.

In recent years a number of initiatives have been undertaken to raise young people's interest and participation in science and maths at school. It is important to focus on proven schemes that address the main barriers to increasing participation, such as the STEM Ambassadors programme. But raising STEM attainment and participation also requires changes in the approach to mathematics and science at school level.

Some progress, from a low base, has been achieved over recent years. Future progress will be achieved if action is taken to:

- Raise young people's interest and enjoyment of science and maths at school – from primary onwards
- Structure education to encourage STEM study:
 - introduce an automatic enrolment into triple science at GCSE for those achieving level 6 at Key stage 3, focusing on ensuring state schools have the capacity to offer teaching for three separate science GCSEs
 - ensure all young people in education and training undertake some form of maths or numeracy education post-16
- Ensure high quality teaching which inspires and enthuses young people
 - support the teaching workforce in primary schools to deliver exciting science lessons
 - recruit more specialist secondary school teachers
 - continue the support given to the successful further maths support network
- Connect choices to information: the UK needs to develop an US-style Occupational Outlook Handbook to ensure good quality specific information is available to students, their families and advisers at key decision points. High quality, impartial careers advice must be made available to all young people. This must include advice about apprenticeships.

“Government must harness the expertise of successful private and third sector organisations who have demonstrated innovation and value for money”

Focusing on failing and coasting schools, and tackling the attainment gap to deliver a step-change in outcomes

Improving education is a huge challenge and improvements are unlikely to be apparent in the short run. As has been demonstrated through the National Challenge, it is possible through well directed intervention and strong leadership to ‘fix’ failing schools – or at least to bring attainment levels above the 30% floor target level. But a school in which up to 70% of learners fail to achieve the nationally accepted benchmark at age 16 cannot be regarded as providing an acceptable standard of education, regardless of the school’s intake or context. The changes needed by business go beyond the elimination of ‘failing’ schools and require that steps are taken to significantly raise the ‘floor’ and to drive all schools towards new levels of performance.

Research consistently highlights key challenges here as achieving:

- An appropriate accountability framework that promotes high aspirations for all schools
- High-calibre leadership and governance that embodies a school’s values, vision and ethos, and that builds capacity for effective and sustainable delivery
- Effective systems and organisation that allows schools, and the highly skilled professionals within them to focus on the core function of learning and teaching
- Solutions that address the barriers to learning that confront students, particularly in more challenging contexts.

Chapter three highlights how independent providers have focused on these issues to turn around failing schools. It outlines the greater role that private and independent providers can play – if given the chance and the right framework in which to operate – to ensure the education system is in a better position to address these challenges through raising the standards of education in failing and coasting schools and local authorities, delivering better educational outcomes and better value for taxpayers’ money.



3 Providing education services to enable schools to raise performance

This report sets out a clear statement of business priorities for schools for the new government. Private and third sector providers of education services are already playing a role in tackling failure in the schools system and there is potential for this to be expanded. Government should send out a clear message that schools and local authorities should embrace a greater diversity of support – from private and third sector providers – to bring in fresh ideas, best practice and achieve more efficient, responsive and effective educational services.

The debate on improving schools should centre on two factors:

- **How best to improve educational outcomes**
- **How to achieve better value for money in an environment where public spending will be particularly constrained.**

Our case studies from private and independent providers of education services show they can deliver. For example, EdisonLearning has achieved significant improvements in Northampton town, closing the results gap between the secondary schools and national measures by six percentage points, and in the primary sector by almost 22 percentage points. This was achieved through a collaborative change management process, re-confirming each school's identity and ethos, and strengthening systems, thereby improving outcomes for young people across Northampton.

Removing barriers to innovation will require a commitment to invest in innovation and system design as a fundamental cost of engagement. For example, since 2000, Cambridge Education has been delivering significant improvements in the educational outcomes of young people in Islington by bringing their innovative approach to engaging ethnic minorities and through their commitment to drive up the strategic management capability in the borough's schools.

The government must harness the expertise of successful private and third sector organisations that have demonstrated their ability to innovate in delivering value for money educational services and operate in challenging conditions. Many have the capacity to help government achieve the changes required, and can bring new ideas to transform schools and the education system.

Our case study evidence clearly shows that schools need support to drive improvements in the outcomes they want to achieve and that business needs.



Improving educational outcomes through leadership and innovation

New providers can bring innovative ideas and methods for turning around failure – at the level of both individual schools and local authorities.

Local education authorities can be trapped in lifecycles of poor results. By bringing leadership and change management expertise, private and independent providers have shown how they can challenge poor performance. Often this is achieved by working with staff who want to drive innovation and change.

Case study: Bradford District Pupil Referral Unit and Serco

First registered in November 2008, Bradford District PRU is a commissioning enterprise of a number of key providers that give access to individual, personalised pathways to maximise the learning opportunities for young people (largely of secondary age) with complex social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

‘MORE4U’, as the PRU was re-branded following consultation with its learners, is a unique collaboration between a broad range of alternative providers who are passionate about giving equal opportunities to young people who are struggling to cope with secondary (mainstream) education. In contrast to most pupil referral units or short-stay schools, there is no single building or classroom where groups of learners are taught. Rather, personalised pathways are established for each young person on completion of assessment of their current situation, and their abilities and aspirations, and identify the right provision whether it is vocational or academic. What is clear is that every young person has a positive learning experience with substantive outcomes.

With over 275 learners who receive education, training and support from 15 different providers (colleges, voluntary and specialist organisations), it offers a qualitative learning experience by providing a multi-agency, holistic response to young people and their families. Notwithstanding the support of those involved, MORE4U ensures all its learners access high quality accredited outcomes – the key driver for ensuring positive destinations post-16.

With such high numbers of pupils with complex needs, managing their attendance, behaviour and educational and vocational achievements is no mean feat. But the approach recognises the needs of the young person. No two pupils will have the same background and the same needs.

Outcomes

- With only one full year of operation the recent Ofsted report rates the provision as satisfactory with a good capacity for sustained improvement
- Engagement has improved – the learners and families are now well known, rather than being absent from school, and possibly linked to antisocial behaviour
- Learners value the tailored provision – recent quotes from learners include:

‘Being here has changed my life’
Learner aged 15

‘Since I have been at District PRU I have learned to control my anger and change it into positive energy. This is because my tutors treat me like a young adult, they don’t rush me to finish my work, and they let me finish it in my own time. I now feel more positive about my learning’
Learner aged 16

‘I am now more positive about my future, I am more confident about achieving my goals and getting a good job, maybe even travelling’
Learner aged 15

‘It is better here than school and I actually feel like I am learning something’
Learner aged 16

To improve educational outcomes, private and third sector involvement in the schools system must be allowed to become more strategic. Too often the extent of engagement is through running back office support services such as payroll and IT support. While effective, the full potential of opening up the system to a greater diversity of providers is not being realised.

The government must establish a better functioning framework to facilitate intervention and improve attainment. Government must harness the expertise of successful private and third sector organisations that have demonstrated their ability to innovate in delivering value for money services and operate effectively in challenging conditions. Many have the capacity to help government achieve the changes required, and can bring new ideas to transform public services.

The current system lacks supply side flexibility, there is limited ability to expand good schools and to close down

underperforming schools. As a result, popular schools are oversubscribed, rationing places based on admission criteria (usually geographical). This reduces choice available to parents, in some areas particularly, perhaps, to those who are less able to move to be near good schools.

Policies aimed at intervening in and supporting poorly performing schools, and closing them if need be, are an important part of the current policy framework. In part they can be seen as mechanisms designed to replicate market signals and mechanisms leading to eventual exit, but in a more managed way.

The current vision is for the improvement of schools through co-operation, tackling underperformance through partnerships and accredited school groups. This is expected to improve the flexibility of the supply side.

Case study: Cambridge Education@ Islington delivering sustained improvement

Cambridge Education has been providing education services in the London Borough of Islington since 2000 – the latest contract runs until 2013. This is testament to the sustained improvement Cambridge Education has delivered and the close relationship that has been built with the Council.

Cambridge Education highlights the impact of employing talented, committed people who work extremely hard as a key factor in improving educational outcomes for young people in Islington. The high performance culture is also stimulated by the nature of the contract – Cambridge Education is paid a bonus depending on the results it achieves.

The relationship with the Council has been very strong. CE@ Islington's director of schools and service director (children's champion) are members of the borough's children's services management team. There are also direct links with the lead member on matters related to schools and learning. The change in relationship, from client contractor to partners is very much reflected in the later contracts (2005 and 2009). But there are also many other formal and informal links between CE@Islington staff and the council staff. Two other factors have been influential in the success of the partnership. Cambridge Education was determined to have cordial but robust relationships with schools and there is now mutual trust and respect. This has been achieved by high quality staff spending as much time as possible in schools, understanding their contexts and supporting them as well as challenging.

Secondly, their work with ethnic minorities has been differentiated and rigorous. Cambridge Education is able to demonstrate the progress of each minority group.

Outcomes:

- Significant year-on-year improvement in proportion of students achieving Level 2 (5xGCSE@A*-C): 2007 – 49.3%; 2008 – 56.4%; 2009 – 65.3%
- Year-on-year improvement in proportion of students achieving Level 2, including English and maths: 2007 – 37.4%, 2008 – 38.9%; 2009 – 45%
- Key improvements at KS2 include: Caribbean boys 38% in 2007, 52% in 2008, 77% in 2009. Pupils for whom English is not their first language: 55% in 2007, 64% in 2008, 69% in 2009
- Sustained improvement and an ability to continue to make significant progress.

Case study: Northampton Town Schools working with EdisonLearning

EdisonLearning was engaged by Northamptonshire Local Authority in 2008 to support the improvement of a group of 16 primary schools and three secondary schools (joined by a fourth in January 2009).

All of these schools were considered to be at risk of underperforming, whilst six of the primary schools were deemed to be in need of urgent intervention. Three of the primary schools had been issued 'notice to improve' at their previous inspection. In the 2008 Key stage 2 assessments, prior to working with EdisonLearning seven of the 16 schools were in the bottom quartile of the 'value added' in terms of pupil progress. All four of the secondary schools were part of the National Challenge initiative due to less than 30% of their pupils achieving 5 A*-C GCSE or equivalent passes with English and maths. Three of the four fell into the bottom quartile for 'value added' in 2008.

EdisonLearning was tasked with improving outcomes for pupils and building sustainable capacity for ongoing improvement across the cluster.

A replicable and scalable model for improving school performance

The challenge of facilitating a sustainable change in performance informed the creation of a new approach to school improvement, reflecting recent research into the features and qualities of outstanding schools, and introducing strong distributed leadership and robust network structures.

Through a rigorous process of collaborative network days and school-based development days, facilitated by EdisonLearning's achievement advisers, new concepts, processes and systems were introduced to enable each individual school to begin the process of transforming its approach to leadership and management, its curriculum and its engagement with students and families, this included a collaborative change management process, re-confirming each school's identity and ethos, strengthening systems, and improving outcomes for young people across Northampton.

School based Development Days held in each school contain 3 core elements:

- Quality learning coaching – for example, observation of learning in the classroom of a nominated teacher with individual feedback and coaching
- Whole-staff development – a twilight training session to develop classroom practice
- Leadership follow-through – this is characterised by working with the headteacher and appropriate nominated staff to support implementation of the key actions.

A core element of the programme is the establishment of achievement teams, a form of quality circle for teachers that use pupil assessment data as a springboard for discussion about improving classroom practices, particularly for vulnerable students and those not making progress.

Key outcomes of the programme are linked to:

- Raising quality of teaching and learning
- Strengthening school capacity to improve (eg self-evaluation/whole school view)
- Further development of leadership across the school
- Development days in an individual school allow the partnership work to be responsive to the school's needs whilst progressing the EdisonLearning school improvement programme.

Evaluating impact and securing sustainable improvements

EdisonLearning introduced a rigorous system of evaluating and tracing the quality of Teaching for Learning (TfL) and in the autumn term 2009 90% of teaching was judged to be satisfactory or better and 62% was judged good or better across the schools.

Recent Ofsted inspections involving two of the schools removed one from special measures and the other was graded 'good'.

Outcomes:

- An average improvement of 33% KS4 results A* – C, including English and maths, across the secondary sector over the first nine months
- Significant improvements in closing the results gap (approx 6 percentage points) between the secondary schools and national measures and in the primary sector at key stage 2, combining the percentages achieving National Curriculum level 4 or better in English, mathematics & science, by almost 22 percentage points
- All of the secondary schools showed a rise in contextual valued added (CVA) scores, and three of the schools rose from the bottom/lower quartile to the middle quartile
- At key stage 2, the gap in attainment between the cluster of schools and the national average was halved
- Improved systems in all schools to ensure quality of Teaching with 90% of teaching satisfactory or better and 62% good or better.

Ensuring new academies have the freedom to innovate

Many academies have delivered demonstrable improvements in results and outcomes for young people, but their success has not been uniform. Following the introduction of the academy programme, academy autonomy was watered down, with local authorities taking seats on academy boards, and the introduction of restrictions over the curriculum taught in academies by the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

Re-establishing the freedom to innovate and deliver high quality learning through proven methods must be a priority for government. Legislation to extend the academies programme includes provisions to remove the requirement to consult

the local authority before opening an academy. Government must ensure that the intentions of the legislation are followed through in practice.

Many business sponsors are keen to ensure that their vision of successful education can be implemented.

Project management framework for new academies

The expansion of academies provides an opportunity to improve the process of management and commissioning. An outcomes-based commissioning approach is needed to ensure new schools and academies deliver the high quality outcomes needed by young people and their families, and are able to innovate to achieve the outcomes.

Case study: National College Accelerate to Headship Programme and Nord Anglia Education

Nord Anglia Education has been awarded the contract to develop and deliver the Tomorrow's Heads element of the Accelerate to Headship Programme on behalf of the National College for the Leadership of Schools and Children's Services. This is an intensive leadership development programme for outstanding individuals with the ability and commitment to follow an accelerated route not only to headship, but to become a system leader. The Tomorrow's Heads route is open to a wide range of individuals and will cater for at least 125 participants each year, including both teachers and professionals from outside of the education sector.

For this reason, the programme is highly personalised, but consists of the following key elements:

- A leadership development adviser (LDA) is assigned to each participant to not only guide and support them through the programme, but also ensure that the participant receives the necessary level of challenge
- Programme participants complete a 360° diagnostic assessment to identify strengths that can be built on and areas that need to be developed. They then work with their LDA to identify bespoke learning opportunities and map their route through Year One of the programme

- Each participant will complete an in-school project, linked to the school development plan, which tests their leadership skills and demonstrates their ability to lead a whole school issue and secure buy-in from colleagues. They will be supported by an in-school mentor as well as their LDA
- Participants also complete a placement project in a contrasting environment to allow them to expand their contextual literacy and to demonstrate their capacity to lead in a situation that is unfamiliar to them
- Participants are expected to attend a two-week residential leadership school in year two of the programme.

Outcomes:

- 95% of participants targeted to progress onto the National Professional Qualification for headship within three years and are therefore in their first Headship role within four years
- Participants will have the chance to attend various professional development and networking opportunities throughout the experience and will develop high quality leadership skills.



Achieving better value for money and enabling innovation

Under the 'total place' initiative all the public money that goes into an area – covering local government, education, welfare, police, courts, skills – is added up to identify the synergies and overlaps. The aim is to improve quality by joining up services but also to cut out duplication, reduce overheads and decide how much is really making a difference. While this is not a magic bullet, the potential to save money by taking action to prevent problems and costs further down the line is significant. For example a convincing case can be made for spending more on children's services to prevent children ending up in care, with all the social consequences of poor educational attainment, poor health outcomes and higher crime. Birmingham's chief executive has suggested that for every £1 spent on children's services there was a £4 saving – for the police, courts and probation. But budgets need to be pooled for this sort of savings to be realised.

Cumbria is one of the first places to pilot the total place initiative. A total of £7.1bn is going into the region, or £14,000 per head of population. If all the public agencies found a 10% improvement, a saving of £710m would be made. In Birmingham, the figure is £7.3bn, or about £7,500 per head – with the potential to make a £730m saving. It is not possible to extrapolate a total saving across local authority areas but there is clearly significant potential to achieve savings.

Better commissioning practice is urgently needed

Local authorities should recognise commissioning must mean more than setting service requirements and then delivering them in-house. Commissioning is a strategic process, involving assessing needs and standards of current provision, and allowing time to consider questions of service design. The procurement process is a key stage of this cycle, and establishing more effective outcomes-focused procurement will be a major step forward for service quality. It requires local authorities to seek best value by procuring services from the best provider, and basing their decisions on a level playing field for bids.

Evidence from local authorities which have embraced their role of commissioners of services for schools in their area demonstrate that such an approach has brought real benefits in improved educational outcomes and strengthened the strategic role of the local authority. Such local authorities work with schools to set strategic goals and choose the best provider.

The process of commissioning strategically involves:

- The identification and assessment of needs and aspirations of citizens and communities – including local businesses
- Specifying the outcomes and pathways to secure the outcomes providers will need to meet, while achieving value for money
- Defining the resources available (including contributions from user charges) and determining how to allocate these (including setting eligibility criteria)
- Adopting an open-minded approach to identifying and evaluating the options for meeting needs and aspirations – including dialogue with a range of potential suppliers
- Matching the options for service delivery with the available resources, including individual or neighbourhood budgets and wider community objectives
- Choosing between potential suppliers on the basis of competitive neutrality where the local authority and not individuals are procuring the services from external or in-house providers
- Helping citizens to make appropriate choices, through improving the information available to them and through brokering collective choices which improve the value for money
- Market management, including identifying appropriate suppliers, attracting new entrants and ensuring competitive behaviour
- Procuring the services from private and third sector providers or on the same basis from in-house providers or public sector partners
- Continually monitoring and reviewing the achievement of outcomes and engaging and consulting with service users, staff and other stakeholders at all stages of the process.

Case study: A4e engaging young people with hands-on learning

A4e (Action for Employment) is an international business delivering services for individuals, organisations and governments with a vision of directly improving people's lives. The company's education division is primarily engaged in tackling educational failure in the 14-19 sector and working to reduce the number of young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs).

A4e has applied its experience to establish vocational training centres to provide training opportunities for young people who have been excluded or are at risk of exclusion from school.

There are many reasons young people disengage with education – such as Tasha, a looked-after child, with set-backs in her personal life including three changes of carer since 2006. Tasha had poor attendance at school and was a constant truant. She has experimented with drugs which had caused one of her carers to ask her to leave the home.

But Tasha always had a flair for learning new things and capturing this enthusiasm is part of the success of A4e's approach. In response to the problems facing schools and young people, A4e has set up vocational training centres known as 'Vox Centres', to provide training opportunities for young people who have been excluded or are at risk of exclusion from school. A4e have been highly successful in engaging the hardest to reach and disadvantaged young people – 65% of young people on the roll of the Vox centres were at risk of exclusion, and 35% had been excluded meaning the Vox was their sole formal education. A4e are providing bespoke training and support programmes to enable them to progress into further education, apprenticeships and sustainable employment. The service provided to schools, local authorities or LLSCs, who fund the places at Vox centres, is inclusive to be suitable for young people from a range of backgrounds.

Students like Tasha attend for one to three days a week depending on their individual programme of study and work alongside a specialist trainer in a vocational setting. They may also continue with their academic studies at school albeit with parallel support encouraging renewed motivation and commitment. The young people work in mixed groups on employment focused projects – at the end of their time with Vox they have, on average, reported that they feel better about themselves on two or three 'life measures' of the Rickter Scale* self-assessment that they undertake before and after their courses.

The individual person-centred approach is critical to the success of the young people whose barriers to engagement and inclusion are often multi-faceted. A specialist life coaching programme has been piloted to run alongside the Vox studies to deal with deep rooted social and emotional difficulties, enabling a smoother transition and success rate for the student. The holistic model allows a programme of study and pastoral support tailored to the individual needs and aspirations of the young person. Tasha left the Vox Centre with nine qualifications including City & Guilds Level 1 adult literacy and numeracy and NVQ Level 1 in customer service. These achievements have enabled her to progress on to the local FE college to undertake hairdressing and got herself a part time job in HMV.

The business model operated by A4e involves up-front investment in return for 'pledges' from schools that they will take up places. This approach has been developed to find the route straight into the funding, involving long discussions with heads, organising individual timetables for learners, arranging transport etc. It has also made succession planning difficult requiring use of temporary and contract staff as possible fluctuations in demand for places in the Vox centre may mean there are not enough places taken up to cover costs. A4e is also keen that the status of vocational education improves so a wider pool of young people may benefit from this approach.

Outcomes:

- Significant results in engaging excluded young people and those at risk from exclusion – average retention across all Vox Centres is 77%, reaching 90% in some centres
- Most young people in the centres achieve valued qualifications – 87% of participants at the top performing centre, with an average across all centres of 68% achieving qualifications (which includes data for year 10 pupils still engaged in learning)
- Providing progression into positive destinations – 95% of young people at the top performing Vox centre have moved on to vocational training, college, employment or continued with A4e – with the average for all centres at 64%
- Providing specialist trainers in the vocational areas required by the young people – the trainers focus on skills, while pastoral care is managed by the specialist IAG function in the centre.

* A tool for assessing clients' perceptions about their current situation including basic skills and motivation.

Deciding on the optimum length of contracts is key to encourage more companies to invest over time. But some contracts require upfront investment in services or carry staff transfer responsibilities. In these cases providers need certainty that there will be time for a return on investment, while public authorities need a lifecycle approach when assessing performance. Longer-term contracts help reassure concerned workforces too as they provide stability and encourage providers, staff and trade unions to develop strong, constructive channels of communication. Clearly, the more capital intensive contracts will be the harder to negotiate but straight service level transfer arrangements could allow providers to bid with the opportunity to be flexible on the length of the contract, depending on these sorts of factors and their ability to manage them.

Getting the contract length right will be an essential attribute in a model that requires providers to deliver front-loaded savings and existing examples suggest how it can be used to best effect.

Outcome-focused commissioning arrangements, rather than input-driven procurements stimulate innovation and improve return on investment. It is important to consider how to do things differently, not just how to do the same things more efficiently.

Local authorities have an important role to play in monitoring the performance of service providers, and need to focus on becoming outstanding commissioners to ensure best outcomes and value for money.

Contracts which focus on outcomes rather than inputs produce more innovative and effective public services. Good providers want to be challenged to perform better on outcomes and costs, and are willing to take on higher levels of risk on service delivery in return for a fair return on investment. By giving providers freedom to design service packages and holding them to account by making their payment dependent on achieving contractual outcomes, commissioners can incentivise the achievement of the outcomes that matter, whether it is lower childhood obesity levels, higher GCSE pass rates, or reduced rates of reoffending.

Case study: Darwen Aldridge Community Academy, sponsored by The Aldridge Foundation

The Aldridge Foundation is the sole sponsor of Darwen Aldridge Community Academy (DACA) in Lancashire, the first of four Aldridge academies. DACA provides 11-19 education, bringing a sixth form back to the area for the first time in a generation. The lead specialism of Aldridge academies is entrepreneurship, which describes a mindset which solves problems rather than accepting defeat, and seeks opportunities in everyday life. The academy took over an existing cohort of students and staff of a school which had been in special measures. Since opening in 2008 the academy has demonstrated how entrepreneurship can be used to transform a school and regenerate a community, thus changing attitudes to the value of teaching and learning.

In order to embed the specialism and to give it meaning to staff and students, working together the Foundation and the academy settled on six key entrepreneurial attributes:

- Determination – being prepared to see a task through to the best of one’s ability
- Creativity – continually looking for innovation and original ideas
- Problem solving – identifying problems in advance and finding the solutions to them
- Risk taking – calculating risk and evaluating how much risk to take
- Teamwork – the ability to work with and lead others
- Passion – putting your heart and soul into something one believes in.

Within the academy, students in all year groups are awarded DAKAs*, described as ‘The Currency of Entrepreneurship’ in each of the six attributes. As students gather DAKAs they begin to recognise their key strengths and, equally importantly, which attributes they need to work on. The attributes are taught through specialist entrepreneurship lessons, as well as through themed terms which are embraced by all faculties at the academy. Entrepreneurship provides a whole-school ethos that sees the specialism taught discreetly through all lessons. In conjunction with u-explore, DACA has created the first online entrepreneurship curriculum for Key stage 3.

It is important to the Foundation that these skills can then be recognised outside the academy by employers and the Foundation is now working with one of the country’s leading awarding bodies to develop a new accredited qualification package to be piloted at DACA. Part of the attainment and accreditation for students at DACA will be through the practical application of skills in the Entrepreneurship Bridge, the focal point of the new academy building where students will have the opportunity to run a start-up enterprise for a year on-site, which will give them an insight into leadership and decision-making.

Outcomes:

- The implementation of a more innovative means of teaching the curriculum has seen real results in student success. In just one school year, using traditional measures of attainment, the academy saw:
 - the number of students leaving with 5 A*-C GCSEs rise from 46% in the summer before the academy took over the school to 68% the following year
 - the number of students attaining Level 5 in English increase from 49% to 71%, mathematics increase from 65% to 73%, and science from 50% to 69%
 - the number of students attaining Level 5 in English increase from 49% to 71%, mathematics increase from 65% to 73%, and science from 50% to 69%
- Students have a more open mind to further and higher education. In the first year of operation, the intake of sixth form students into year 12 was around thirty. In the second year of operation, intake into year 12 increased to over a hundred
- Students participate in a number of programmes designed to improve their employability, including IAG provision through tailored u-explore programmes, and the first entrepreneurship career academy in the country.

* ‘DAKA’ is the academy’s own and exclusive currency of entrepreneurship. Students are awarded DAKAs for using their entrepreneurial currency to improve themselves, their learning, academy life or the community. The DAKA currency teaches students the additional vocational skills to help maximise opportunities and fulfill their potential.



Case study: Bracknell Forest Council working with EC Harris

EC Harris was appointed as Bracknell Forest Council's managing partner in December 2009 to deliver its primary capital strategy for change and all the objectives within it. The managing partner leads the primary capital programme of works and brings the necessary skills, expertise and resources to ensure a successful implementation of the strategy. One of the key features of the programme need for the client was to drive as much efficiency into the programme as a whole to ensure timely delivery of new facilities which still met the criteria of the strategy for change. In addition, the programme had to deliver on a strategic basic need for significant numbers of new pupil places. This blend of demanding outcomes meant that we had to use a blend of high quality technical capability and education-led thinking to ensure we could meet all the exacting client goals in a coherent way.

A programme management office (PMO) has been set up that brings together the external expertise of the managing partner and its supply chain with the local authority, schools, local communities, private and voluntary sector organisations to ensure the vision is delivered for local children and young people.

EC Harris used its experience and expertise to create a bespoke blend of the right skills and understanding to deliver appropriate strategic direction and technical expertise in linking and prioritising the key strategic plans and policies such as the children and young people's plan, the school places plan, the capital programme and the schools' asset management plan.

This programme is ongoing and is now working to a phased plan. One of the key drivers for the authority was to ensure that in the need for the core basic need provision on time and on budget, the educational transformation aspects of the core strategy were not lost against what were and remain pressing timetables for action.

Outcomes

- A PMO that provides the hub of the programme and is used to ensure efficiency, certainty, speed and control of delivery, thereby ensuring as efficient approach as possible
- A PMO brings together all the workstreams of a portfolio of projects into a efficient and coordinated vehicle for delivery with centralised reporting and programming securing tight governance and therefore a continued focus on the long term educational gains
- Linking the programmes and projects to Bracknell's organisational structure by exercising a true programme governance role, ensuring compliance with the programme execution plan, authority's policy and standards, with gateway reviews and the overall development strategy ensuring that schools wer able to continue with their 'day job' and address change management issues unfettered by unnecessary involvement in problem solving the build and development programmes
- Review and verification of forecast school places plan to agree and confirm capacity needs for next five years –including, on the back of the review by external scrutineers, a reduction of the original scope as analysis showed additional form of entry was not needed in the current phase, saving the authority approx £4m
- An agreed position on what 'good' looks like in primary education workshop with the authority and schools so that we could agree the FF&E and ICT needs to deliver a transformational curriculum. This resulted in the supply of better, education-led solutions at a saving of up to 50% of the benchmark budgets – giving more money to the build programme for better environments overall.

Recommendations to deliver improvements in educational outcomes

For school reforms to deliver improvements in educational outcomes it is essential that:

- New academies and free schools maintain their freedom to innovate – by allowing them to choose appropriate qualifications, apply proven innovative teaching techniques and maintain their independence
- The development of federations and chains of schools is supported by robust quality assurance processes. This will enable the engagement of a range of organisations in the development of chains of schools driving up outcomes through systems leadership and efficiencies
- The full range of expertise and capacity that exists in the private sector and third sector is utilised to improve value for money and drive through innovation and change. Government must open up services to competition and in the case of free schools allow profit-making companies to be involved in due course
- The Department for Education should set out a clear market strategy for educational services and ensure schools and academies are supported to engage with private providers of support and improvement services.

Businesses recognise they have an important role to play in engaging with education – providing high quality work experience and shaping careers advice. Employers are clear that they look to the education system to develop confident, motivated young people, with the attitude, knowledge and skills to succeed in life and in the world of work. In particular, they want young people to have:

- A strong base of literacy, numeracy and IT skills
- The broad set of employability skills (team working, problem-solving, communication, business and customer awareness, self-management) necessary for all jobs
- A strong grounding in science and maths, with the most capable encouraged to study these vital subjects further
- Access to a range of learning options – academic, vocational and applied – with appropriate information, advice and guidance
- Qualifications that are recognised, understood and valued by business.

It is against these priorities that business will judge the performance of the education system.

¹ ONS (2009), *Public Service Output, Input and Productivity: Education*

² Department for Children, Schools & Families (2008), *Gaining Ground: Improving progress in coasting secondary schools*







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