

Education and employer partnerships celebrated at annual Guildhall event - 22 January 2010

SSAT press release

- **SSAT hosts a policy forum of business and school leaders to champion school/employer partnerships**
- A new publication highlighting key characteristics of successful partnerships is launched
- SSAT announces the winners of its Sponsor of the Year Award and a new award for Education - Employer Partnerships.

Business leaders and headteachers met this week to further the aim that every school has an effective long-term partnership with an employer.

A policy forum, organised by the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT), brought the two groups together to identify the key characteristics of a sustainable and effective partnership, how barriers can be overcome, and how best practice can be mainstreamed so that every school can benefit from linking with an employer.

The forum, held at the Guildhall in London on 21 January 2010 and supported by the Education and Employers Taskforce, was attended by over 30 headteachers, employers and business representatives including BP, the Institute of Directors and KPMG.

Examples of good practice emerged from the discussion, including:

- Developing on-site facilities with businesses to provide hands-on experience - for example the automotive skills centre at Great Sankey High School in Warrington, Cheshire where students work alongside RAC trainers to gain qualifications in motor vehicle engineering
- Employees going into schools to help with reading
- Linking schools to networks of banks and retailers to encourage engagement
- Employers sitting on governing bodies
- Large firms encouraging their suppliers to create school links.

The event also saw the launch of: 'Creating effective partnerships with employers: guidance for teachers'. Produced by the SSAT in collaboration with the Education and Employers Taskforce, the publication identifies the key characteristics of successful employer engagement, presenting case studies and suggested strategies to encourage schools to create their own effective partnerships with employers.

Elizabeth Reid, Chief Executive at the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT), who chaired the forum, said:

'This was an important event which highlighted the mutual benefits of partnerships between schools and employers, and the many innovative schemes that are underway. Successful

partnerships bring learning to life for young people, raise standards and create opportunities for professional development for both teachers and the employees of partner organisations.

'The challenge now is to ensure effective partnerships become a reality for all schools, and we're committed to working with employers and school leaders to help achieve this aim.'

Bob Wigley, Co-Chair of the Education and Employers Taskforce said:

'Partnerships between employers and schools can make a real difference to young people. The aim of Education and Employers Taskforce is that every school and college has an effective partnership with employers which provide young people with the inspiration, motivation, knowledge and opportunities they need to help them achieve their potential. Whilst the majority of schools now have good individual relationships with some employers and undertake activities such as work experience, we know most schools want employers to be more heavily involved in supporting work across all age groups and the curriculum areas.'

Award winners

Following the policy forum, the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust announced the winners of its Sponsor of the Year Award and the new Education-Employer Partnership Award at its annual Guildhall reception.

Over 500 headteachers and employers attended the reception, at which the Rt Hon Ed Balls MP, Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families presented Sir John Cass's Foundation with the Sponsor of the Year Award and Manchester Academy and Pinsent Masons LLP with the Education-Employer Partnership Award.

Sponsor of the Year Award

Kevin Everett, Chairman, Sir John Cass's Foundation, who received the award said:

'I am delighted to accept this honour on behalf of the Foundation. It is gratifying to learn that the support given over the last 10 years has resulted in such large improvements, both in terms of examination results and partnerships between schools, businesses and charitable foundations.'

Sir John Cass's Foundation is a leading educational charity which promotes participation and achievement in education. The Foundation has been supporting schools in London with the SSAT since 1998, contributing circa £3m towards 34 specialist schools, three academies and a parent promoted school. Since receiving support towards specialist status, the schools have increased the number of students achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C. In one school this increase has exceeded 30%.

Education-Employer Partnership award

The SSAT's Education-Employer Partnership award has been newly created this year to celebrate partnerships between businesses and schools across the country.

Kathy August, Deputy Chief Executive (ULT), Manchester Academy, who received the award said:

'Our ethos at Manchester Academy and across the United Learning Trust is to bring out the best in everyone and develop in our students a lifelong love of learning. This not only creates the environment for a successful school, it also provides the first steps to making our students strong, positive, employees of tomorrow.

'Employers such as Pinsent Masons who encourage their colleagues to become involved in academies such as ours are critical to establishing the reality of the adult working world to our students. We know this is a partnership that pays dividends; for our students, our staff and also for those from Pinsent Masons and elsewhere who give up their time to work with us.'

Manchester Academy, a specialist business and enterprise college in the inner city area of Moss Side, Manchester, serves 850 students aged 11-19. Students from different year groups are mentored by staff from the Global 100 law firm Pinsent Masons, in order to improve their literacy, numeracy and enterprise and employability skills to raise aspirations.

Their exemplary partnership has mutually benefited Manchester Academy and Pinsent Masons. Students at the academy have shown a more positive attitude towards learning and their grades, particularly in literacy and maths, have improved. Their employability skills have also been developed, better preparing them for their working lives.

Employees at Pinsent Masons have also benefitted from this partnership. The programme forms part of the company's corporate responsibility, the purpose of which is 'inspiring young lives'. Staff have found the programme rewarding, seeing first-hand the importance of helping to build students' confidence and enthusiasm as well as assisting with the development of core academic skills. It has also helped staff to break down barriers within the company, resulting in increased motivation and retention.

Jonathan Fortnam, Corporate Responsibility Partner, Pinsent Masons, said:

'We are delighted to receive this award. It reflects the creativity and commitment of both Pinsent Masons and the Manchester Academy working together to inspire the students at the Academy to achieve their potential.'

Students from Brentwood Ursuline Convent School provided the trumpet fanfare and students from Birchwood High School the evening's musical entertainment.

Notes to editors

The Education and Employers Taskforce

The Taskforce is an independent charity which aims to ensure that all young people can benefit from effective partnerships between education and employers.

The Taskforce vision is to ensure that every school and college has an effective partnership with employers to provide its young people with the inspiration, motivation, knowledge, skills

and opportunities they need to help them achieve their potential and so to secure the UK's future prosperity.

www.educationandemployers.org