

YOUR  
GUIDE TO  
**TRUST**  
SCHOOLS



department for  
**education and skills**

# What

A new type of school has emerged that aims to play to the strengths of teachers, governors and pupils, while responding to the needs of its local community.

While Trust schools remain local authority-maintained, they are supported by a charitable foundation, or a Trust. Trust partners could be a local business, charity, Higher or Further Education Institution, or community group. Microsoft, Barnado's

and Northumbria University are three organisations that are already working as potential Trust partners.

By their nature, Trust schools will not be uniform: it's up to each school to decide who it would like to partner with.

Trust schools have additional flexibilities to manage their assets and admissions criteria – in accordance with the admissions code – and employ their staff directly. Like any other maintained school, they teach the National Curriculum, are inspected by Ofsted, and receive the same amount of funding.

No school will be forced to become a Trust; it's up to the governing body to decide.

## **BACKGROUND**

Trusts schools were first outlined in the 2005 White Paper 'Higher Standards, Better Schools For All'. The paper set out the Government's vision for schools to have greater autonomy, a strong ethos and positive working relationships with parents, children, the local community and other schools, all within a framework of local accountability. This vision came a step closer with last year's Education and Inspections Act.

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## **CONTENTS:**



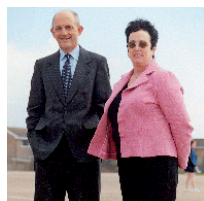
# 4

Sharnbrook Upper School, Bedfordshire



# 6

Strawberry Fields Primary School, Leeds



**TRUST SCHOOLS**  
are schools  
supported by a charitable  
foundation, or Trust

The DfES says partnerships between schools and organisations work well, and points to the success of both voluntary-aided and specialist schools. According to the DfES, in 2006 61 per cent of specialist schools gained five or more A\*-C GCSEs or equivalent, compared to 49 per cent in non-specialist schools.

### **DIFFERENT MODELS**

The Trust school model is a flexible one, giving schools the opportunity to create the right learning and working environment for them. Three possible models include:

★ **Group of schools spread throughout the country working with a single Trust**

This arrangement could incorporate a business or charitable foundation

supporting a network of schools countrywide with the aim of developing a specialist subject.

★ **Group of local schools working with a Trust**

A group of local schools can choose to work together to share best practice. This could be with the aim of developing a particular subject, or as a way of addressing a specific issue, such as creating greater 14-19 opportunities. As a group, these Trust schools

are in a position to offer pupils experiences and resources that they might be unable to offer on their own. This already happens in many places, but working under the banner of a Trust can clarify schools' aims, expectations and standards and make the collaboration more sustainable.

★ **The individual school working with a Trust**

Any school could benefit from working with a Trust perhaps made up of a range of possible partners – like universities, community groups and local businesses. These partners can bring new energy, experience and enthusiasm to help drive up standards further. ■

# TRUST?

8

Worle Community School and Westhaven Community Special School, Somerset



10

Sharnbrook John Gibbard Lower School, Bedfordshire

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## CASE STUDY 1

**SCHOOL** Sharnbrook Upper School,

Sharnbrook, Bedfordshire

**SCHOOL TYPE** Foundation

**HEAD** John Clemence



»WE'VE TRIED TO GO FOR [EXTERNAL] PARTNERS WHO HAVE A LOCAL INTEREST BUT NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE«

**S**harnbrook Upper School has long worked with feeder schools to boost teaching and learning, and smooth pupil transition. It also has a strong tradition of industry links, providing work experience opportunities for pupils and professional input to curriculum-related initiatives. But headteacher, John Clemence, and the governors, believe it could achieve more as a Trust.

Sharnbrook's Trust will include six feeder schools and several external partners, such as the nearby Unilever Research and Cranfield University. Current work with feeder schools includes sharing – and funding – foreign language teaching, running joint projects in writing, maths and ICT, and conducting joint training for staff.

However, these initiatives' successes are largely dependent on individuals, explains John. External partnerships tend to be temporary, always reliant upon the right personnel being in place at the right time – obstacles Trust status will overcome. "You're committed in a legal way," says John. "That's how we're seeing it. It's an even greater commitment to collaboration."

When it comes to external partners, Trust status will bring the security of sustainable, long-term commitment. Roger Leech, operations director in corporate research at Unilever, feels schools can tap into Unilever's own networks with business and academia to "access resources and information they might not have a natural route into." ■

**TRUST SCHOOLS**  
can set their own  
admissions criteria, in  
accordance with the  
admissions code

# What can a TRUST offer



## **PARTNERSHIP**

By working with a Trust, individual schools can develop beneficial long-term partnerships with other schools and organisations. Teachers would be well-placed to tap into the experience and expertise of all the Trust's members, sharing best practice, attending joint training sessions and benefiting from economies of scale.

## **SUPPORT**

Trust schools are able to support their pupils' development with bespoke strategies. Rather than relying on a one-size-fits-all solution, a Trust school can identify particular problems or areas it wants to focus on and devise a tailored solution. For example, by working with local businesses in a Trust, schools could provide new vocational

courses for students. Or a secondary school and its feeder primaries may decide to work together under a shared Trust to support transition between Key Stages 2 and 3.

## **COMMUNITY LINKS**

The Trust model will promote the forging of stronger community links as businesses and other local partners get the chance to offer their support to schools. Such an arrangement could help promote community projects or work experience placements for pupils, helping to meet their individual needs.

## **GOOD GOVERNANCE**

A Trust will find and appoint good governors who, in turn, can expect support from the

Trust. In return, the Trust can work to establish a recognisable ethos and set of values for its school or group of schools.

## **CONTROL**

A Trust school does not 'opt out' of local authority control. But it does have more freedom to set its own admissions criteria – in accordance with the admissions code – employ its own staff (subject to the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document) and through the Trust have responsibility for its buildings and land. ■

**S**trawberry Fields is one of four feeder primaries in a proposed Trust that will emphasise strengthening pupil welfare services in schools. The lead secondary is Garforth Community School and external partners are Trinity and All Saints HE College and the local Primary Care Trust. The schools already work closely together to ease pupil transition to the secondary phase.

Strawberry Fields headteacher Ruth Janney believes Trust status will ensure the advances that have already been made through collaboration continue. "As a Trust, we hope to employ a transition mentor to work with Year 6 in

the primaries and with Year 7 at the high school. This will be one person whom they will have regular contact with during transition."

On the family learning side, Strawberry Fields and other primaries will play a key role in efforts to widen parents' access to further and higher education, building on existing success in running parenting activities. The community college aims to extend its provision for adult learners in the primary schools, and external partner Trinity and All Saints HE College could follow suit by offering foundation degrees. ■


## **CASE STUDY 2**

**SCHOOL** Strawberry Fields

**Primary School, Leeds**

**SCHOOL TYPE** Community

**HEAD** Ruth Janney



**» WE CAN DO ALL THESE THINGS  
ALREADY BUT TRUST STATUS  
FORMALISES THEM «**

**TRUST SCHOOLS**  
will not be 'owned' by  
businesses. They may be  
a Trust partner, but  
do not run the school

# How is a TRUST school set up?

Becoming a Trust school requires a formal process that is undertaken by the school and its governing body. This is likely to take around a year. Schools will be able to set up a Trust once relevant sections of the Education and Inspection Act become law early this summer. The process has five stages, outlined here.

## **STAGE 1:**

**Decide who to work with – and how.** Schools should hold a governing body meeting to explore questions like: What benefits will this bring the school? Who would the Trust partners be? Many schools already have relationships with partners that could form a Trust. The Specialist Schools and Academies Trust or the Youth Sport Trust can help schools find a suitable partner (see back page for contact details).

## **STAGE 2:**

**Consultation.** It is important that schools canvass the opinion of all those who could be affected by the status change. The consultation stage is the turn of parents, staff and other local stakeholders, including trade unions, to be consulted on the school's Trust plans. The school must decide how this consultation is carried out; the DfES recommends a four- to six-week 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. There should be a period of at least four weeks (during term time) for representations.

## **STAGE 4:**

**Consider representations and decide whether to acquire the Trust.** It is the school's governing body that makes the decision whether to proceed after taking on board the views and opinions of all the stakeholders. The decision must be made within six months of publishing proposals.

## **STAGE 5:**

**Implementation.** Now 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; the target completion date will have been outlined in the published proposals. ■

Further information can be found in the draft Trust Schools Toolkit at [www.ssatrust.org.uk/trustschools/test/trustschoolstoolkit/default.aspx](http://www.ssatrust.org.uk/trustschools/test/trustschoolstoolkit/default.aspx)

### CASE STUDY 3

**SCHOOL** Worle Community School and Westhaven Community Special School, Weston-super-Mare, Somerset

**SCHOOL TYPE** Community

**HEADS** Trevor Bailey and Jenny Moss



**P**romoting the emotional wellbeing of pupils is the guiding principle of the proposed Worle and Westhaven Schools Trust. “It’s about meeting the Every Child Matters agenda,” says Worle headteacher Trevor Bailey. “There’s a link between the emotional wellbeing of a learner and their resilience as a learner.”

The two schools are part of a six-strong federation formed to address issues of under-achievement and low progression to further and higher education – a reflection of the high level of social deprivation not unusual in seaside towns. “It

was a natural progression to look at Trust status,” says Trevor.

External partners include the North Somerset Primary Care Trust (PCT), North Somerset Council, the University of the West of England, the Bristol-based charitable company ViTaL (Values in Teaching and Learning) and the Human Givens Institute, an organisation that focuses on mental and emotional wellbeing.

“There are some forces in children’s lives that put a glass ceiling on their achievement, and that is frequently emotional wellbeing,” explains Westhaven headteacher Jenny Moss. “We need to put some structures and support in place to help meet their needs but also move out into the community to support their parents. This is why key partners are the Human Givens Institute and the PCT.” ■

**TRUST SCHOOLS**  
aim to build long-term  
relationships  
with partners to raise  
standards

# What could this mean? for YOU?

## **THE STAFF**

Trust school staff are employed directly by the school's governing body, and teachers continue to enjoy the same salary payscale as they would in any maintained school. A Trust school arrangement could also have further professional advantages for school staff.

Because Trust schools work closely with other organisations, and often with other schools, staff would be ideally placed to tap into the resources of this greater collegiate body. A partnership with a higher education institution could allow teachers to work closely with lecturers, developing programmes of study for pupils preparing for tertiary education, while teachers across a network of schools could work together to raise standards and share best practice in a specialist area.

## **THE GOVERNORS**

As schools become more autonomous under the Trust

system, the role of governors becomes greater. Trust appointed governors become the guardians of the Trust's ethos and core values.

Governing bodies of Trust schools will have a legal obligation to take the views of parents into account and, as such, will be required to set up a parent council if the Trust decides to appoint the majority of governors.

## **THE PARENTS**

The structure of Trust schools enables parents to play a greater role in shaping the education of their children, from the very beginning of the process. Parents will always be consulted when a school proposes to acquire a Trust, and one third of Trust schools' governing

bodies will continue to be made up of parents.

## **THE COMMUNITY**

Existing community links are formalised and strengthened under the Trust structure, which is why organisations play an important role in their community when they decide to become part of a Trust. Not only can local businesses and community groups share their expertise and skills and contribute to policy development as a Trust partner, they would also bring their culture of enterprise and innovation to the school. ■

**T**he Trust idea is a leap of faith,” says headteacher Sheila Kaznowski who is looking forward to the formal partnership between Sharnbrook John Gibbard Lower School with feeder schools and a handful of external organisations. “We don’t know exactly what it will give us, but the fact we will have more control over our finances, and closer collaboration with the schools our children will be going to, has to be a good thing.”

John Gibbard is one of seven schools in a ‘pyramid’ leading to and including Sharnbrook Upper School that’s seeking to form a Trust with external partners Unilever Research and Cranfield University. Unilever has strong ties to the upper school, it offers work experience and input into curriculum-related initiatives.

There is a strong tradition of collaboration within the pyramid, from joint staff training to upper-school foreign language teachers taking classes in the lowers and middles. Such initiatives support consistency and continuity in teaching and learning – particularly relevant in Bedfordshire, where its three-tier system sees pupils change school twice mid-way through a Key Stage. “We already work closely together,” says Sheila. “The Trust is a way of building on that.” ■

#### **CASE STUDY 4**

**SCHOOL** Sharnbrook John Gibbard Lower School, Sharnbrook, Bedfordshire

**SCHOOL TYPE** Community

**HEAD** Sheila Kaznowski



» I WANT TO PROVIDE AS MANY VARIED OPPORTUNITIES FOR MY PUPILS AS I POSSIBLY CAN «

# Who is making TRUSTS happen?



**Former  
headteacher  
Sir Bruce  
Liddington**

was appointed the first Schools Commissioner last September, a role he describes as “national champion for choice, diversity and access”. A key part of the new job is promoting local choice to parents by encouraging variety and diversity across the country’s schools. As such, his role involves encouraging the development of new Academies and Trust schools.

Sir Bruce will be working with a range of national and local organisations, including parents’ organisations, local authorities and other stakeholders. He will also be responsible for signing off local

authority school plans for Building Schools for the Future, a major investment programme that aims to rebuild every English secondary school over the next 15 years.

Sir Bruce’s experiences at the chalkface make him no stranger to what makes a good school. He believes any school, from the highest performing to those that need to improve, could

benefit from considering how a Trust school could help them raise standards. As head of Northampton School for Boys for 13 years, he transformed it from a failing school to a success. Now, as Schools Commissioner, he is determined to ensure other weaker schools improve, “or close, or are replaced by Academies, Trusts or other education providers”, he says.

“I take the view that a parent with a choice between a good school and a not very good school doesn’t have any choice at all,” says Sir Bruce, whose priority is to ensure parents aren’t left simply with Hobson’s choice. He is working closely with local authorities, ensuring they can deliver both genuine choice and fair access to good schools. ■

**The Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT) can help secondary, primary and special schools explore Trust status further. It can also help establish links with prospective Trust partners, such as charities and businesses. For more information, contact the Trust schools team on 020 7802 2967 or visit [www.ssatrust.org.uk/trustschools](http://www.ssatrust.org.uk/trustschools)**

**If you are a specialist sports college and would like advice on becoming a Trust school and finding prospective partners with a sport focus, the Youth Sport Trust can help. For more information, contact Lavern Charles on 020 7843 2372 or visit [www.youthsporttrust.org/SchoolSportXchange](http://www.youthsporttrust.org/SchoolSportXchange)**

**FASNA is a national forum for Foundation and Aided schools, and can help explain the extra flexibilities Trust status can bring to these schools. For more information, visit [www.fasna.org.uk/index.htm](http://www.fasna.org.uk/index.htm)**

Find out more  
Advice and resources are readily  
available to anyone wishing to set up  
a Trust or become a Trust school from  
the following organisations

Specialist Schools and  
Academies Trust at:  
[www.ssatrust.org.uk/trustschools](http://www.ssatrust.org.uk/trustschools)

Youth Sport Trust at:  
[www.youthsporttrust.org  
/SchoolSportXchange](http://www.youthsporttrust.org/SchoolSportXchange)

FASNA at:  
[www.fasna.org.uk/index.htm](http://www.fasna.org.uk/index.htm)

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FRONT COVER PICTURE SHOWS  
TREVOR BAILEY, HEADTEACHER AT  
WORLE COMMUNITY SCHOOL