

# NEW SCHOOLS MODELS POLICY CONTEXT

## 1. LEGISLATIONS

The 2010 schools White Paper, *The Importance of Teaching*, set out a radical reform programme for the schools system. In particular it describes the government's intention to expand the academy programme and to introduce Free Schools: "It is our ambition that Academy status should be the norm for all state schools, with schools enjoying direct funding and full independence from central and local bureaucracy".... "[we invite] Free School applications of any type or phase (including special schools, alternative provision and 16–19 proposals) from teachers, charities, parents and others. Free Schools will be independent state schools which benefit from all the same freedoms and autonomy as Academies".<sup>1</sup>

The White Paper also introduced the notion of University Technology Colleges and Studio Schools: "One of the most exciting ways in which Free Schools will drive innovation here in England will be through University Technology Colleges (UTCs) and Studio Schools. Universities, colleges and businesses are forming partnerships to open UTCs... Each UTC will be sponsored by at least one leading local business and a local higher education institution, and will offer high-quality and high-prestige technical qualifications in shortage subjects, such as engineering. Pupils will combine real practical education with a series of academic GCSEs, to ensure that they have a base of core academic knowledge as well as their technical or vocational qualifications. The JCB Academy in Staffordshire was the forerunner of the UTC model, and plans to become a UTC. We hope that many more will open."

"New Studio Schools will also drive innovation in vocational education as Free Schools. They are 14–19 institutions with an entrepreneurial and vocational focus, catering for students of all abilities who are disengaged by an entirely academic curriculum. Each Studio School will have several business partners connected to one sector of industry. Students will spend part of their week working in these businesses, with older students receiving payment, getting them ready for the world of work while gaining credible qualifications. The first Studio Schools opened in September 2010 in Luton and Kirklees and we expect that many more will open". Currently there is only 1 studio school in London.

The DfE also suggest that, moving forward all new schools in a given area will need to be either an academy or Free School, with the role of the Local Authority being one of identifying "sponsors and partners who will fit with the character of the local community – and help raise aspirations".

Further detail on each of these school types is provided below.

## 2. TYPES OF NEW SCHOOLS

### Academies

It is noted by the RSA in *Unleashing Greatness* that "the expansion of the academies programme under the Coalition government [has been] dramatic. In May 2010 there were 203 academies and by November 2012 there were 2456" (2013: 3).<sup>2</sup> The DfE define academies as being 'publicly funded independent schools'.<sup>3</sup> In practice, this description now means very different things,

although all academies share a governance model that increases their independence from local authorities and creates a stronger link to the Secretary of State (RSA, 2013). The DfE couch this independence in terms of the ‘freedom’ of academies, specifically, their:

- freedom from local authority control;
- ability to set their own pay and conditions for staff;
- freedoms around the delivery of the curriculum;
- ability to change the length of terms and school days.

Academies receive the same level of per-pupil funding as they would receive from the local authority as a maintained school, plus additions to cover the services that are no longer provided for them by the local authority. Academies receive their funding directly from the Education Funding Agency (EFA), however, rather than from local authorities.

The expansion of the original academies programme under the New Labour government had been gradual since the opening of the first ‘city academy’ in 2002. Early academies were sponsored and set up to replace failing schools in poor areas. The sponsors of these schools came from a wide variety of backgrounds including successful schools, businesses, universities, charities and faith bodies. Sponsors were and are held accountable for improving the performance of their schools. Nonetheless the RSA suggest that “the recent report from the National Audit Office (2012) highlights that Ofsted has judged almost half of all sponsored academies as inadequate or satisfactory (the latter is now defined as ‘requiring improvement’)” (2013: 4).

A further type of academy was established after 2010, as a result of the Coalition government’s decisions to encourage good and outstanding schools to ‘convert’ to academy status and to extend the sponsored academy programme into primary schools. Around half of maintained secondary schools in England are now academies, although this expansion is not uniform or universal across localities. Of the 2,456 academies established, as at November 2012 only 536 are sponsored, meaning that over three quarters are ‘converter’ academies (RSA, 2013). Academisation has had less impact on the primary sector with primary academies currently representing only 5%

of all primary schools (RSA, 2013).

As in November 2012, there were 312 academy chains; this figure includes ‘collaborative partnerships’, (academies working together in an informal way which may only involve ‘light touch’ collaboration). Thirty nine per cent of academies are in a chain but this figure falls to just 28% if ‘collaborative partnerships’ are excluded (RSA, 2013). Of sponsors that work with more than one academy, the majority sponsor just two or three (Hill et al., 2012<sup>4</sup>). At the beginning of January 2012, 91 chains had between two and nine sponsored academies in their chain, and only nine chains included 10 or more academies.

### Academy chains as at November 2012 (from RSA, 2013)

Number of open Academies	2,456
Number of Academies in chains (converters and sponsored)	969
Number of Academies in chains of 3+ schools	655
Number of chains	312
Average size of these chains	3.2

It should be noted that Free Schools, University Technical Colleges (UTCs) and Studio Schools (detailed below) are also designated, upon opening, as academies, nevertheless, converter and sponsored academies together comprise 96% of all academies (EFA, 2012)<sup>5</sup>. (RSA, 2013).

### Free Schools

The DfE defines Free Schools as “all-ability state-funded schools set up in response to what local people say they want and need in order to improve education for children in their community”<sup>6</sup>. Free Schools are academies, but distinct from converter and sponsored academies since they are newly created (rather than existing) schools. The Coalition government sees Free Schools as a mechanism for boosting social mobility in areas of disadvantage, as well as promoting parental choice (DfE, 2011)<sup>7</sup>. In light of this, it is interesting to note that, of the 24 Free Schools set up in the first wave, in many cases their admissions appear not to reflect or represent the local demographic profile. Data collected by Gooch (2011)<sup>8</sup> through Freedom of Information requests, for example, show that the overall proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) at the (then) 24 open Free Schools was 9.4%: this is substantially lower than the national average of

16.7% (RSA, 2013). The RSA also suggests that the difference between the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals in a Free School and other schools becomes starker when Free Schools are compared with schools in their immediate vicinity: here, they note, all but two of the initial 24 Free Schools are below the local average for FSM when compared with their five nearest schools with the same pupil age-range.

In May 2013, Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, announced that a further tranche of free school applications had been approved.<sup>9</sup> Within this list a sizeable proportion had been proposed by Academy Chains. For example, three were due to be opened by ARK, three by Oasis, three by the School Partnership Trust and seven by Harris. As Free Schools are a relatively new school type, little has yet been published on this phenomenon (and nothing by the IOE). Colleagues within the IOE have suggested, however, that the Free School route presents Academy Chains with an easier path through which to obtain a school. In other words, the conversion process is often lengthy, complex (since it involves closing and then opening a school) and can also involve considerable resistance from both governing bodies and local stakeholders. In addition the government will pay for the new school building and for this to be refurbished, and Academy chains often have outstanding schools which can be used to support the nascent school's development.

### **Studio schools**

Studio schools are a new type of school designed for 14–19 year olds. The aim of these schools is to deliver project-based, practical learning alongside mainstream academic study. Studio schools often have a subject specialism, but overall the DfE suggest that their focus is on “equipping young people with a wide range of employability skills and a core of academic qualifications, delivered in a practical and project-based way”.<sup>10</sup> As such, study is combined with work placements at local and national employers who are involved in the school. Sixteen studio schools are now open across the country and on 10 April 2013, the Department for Education approved 13 new schools to open in or after September 2014.

### **University technical college**

UTCs are technical academies for 14–19 year olds, sponsored by universities and employers. Combining practical and academic studies, the DfE notes that the characteristics of UTCs are that

they:<sup>11</sup>

- specialise in two curriculum areas (e.g. engineering and science);
- teach core GCSEs alongside technical qualifications, and are expected to offer young people the opportunity to achieve the English Baccalaureate;
- focus on disciplines that require highly-specialised equipment, for example, engineering, manufacturing and construction;
- teach these disciplines alongside developing young people's business, ICT and design skills to prepare students for a range of careers and continuing education at 19;
- have 500 to 800 students.

On 28 March 2013, the Department for Education approved 13 new UTCs through the pre-opening phase to open in September 2014 or beyond.

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## FOOTNOTES

1 See: <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/toolsandinitiatives/schoolswhitepaper/b0068570/the-importance-of-teaching/new-schools-system>

2 See: <http://www.thersa.org/action-research-centre/learning,-cognition-and-creativity/education/reports-and-events/reports/unleashing-greatness>

3 See: <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/academies/b00205692/whatisan-academy>

4 Hill, R., Dunford, J., Parish, N., Rea, S., and Sandals, L. (2012). The growth of academy chains: implications for leaders and leadership. Nottingham: The National College.

5 Education Funding Agency (2012). 'Academies Overview.' PowerPoint presentation by Sue Reekie, Academies Division, South West and West Midlands, at the BCPL and Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership Joint Conference, Hawthorns Conference Centre, West Bromwich, 30 November 2012.

6 <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/freeschools>

7 DfE (2011a). 79 new schools now approved to open from 2012 onwards. Press notice: 10 October 2011; updated 11 October 2011. Available at: [www.education.gov.uk/inthenews/inthenews/a00199061/79-new-schools-now-approved-to-open-from-2012-onwards](http://www.education.gov.uk/inthenews/inthenews/a00199061/79-new-schools-now-approved-to-open-from-2012-onwards)

8 Gooch, R. (2011.) Free Schools and disadvantaged children: the data. 14 November 2011. Available at: <http://schoolduggery.wordpress.com/2011/11/14/free-schoolsand-disadvantaged-children-the-data/>

9 See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/more-than-100-free-schools-applications-approved>

10 See: <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/technical/a0077819/what-are>

11 See: <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/technical/a00198954/utcs>