



Specialist Schools  
and Academies Trust  
EXCELLENCE AND DIVERSITY

## Corporate plan 2007–2008 and 2009–2010



# Glossary

**Academies.** Independent, all-ability state schools supported by sponsors. Academies occupy buildings that are either newly built or refurbished. Some sponsors contribute to a charitable endowment fund to be spent on the school's educational needs.

**Achievement data.** Examination results and other measures of student progress and attainment.

**Applied learning.** Learning that has a direct relevance to the world of work. Students involved in applied learning often work on real projects set by business.

**iNet.** This stands for International Networking for Educational Transformation. We use our international networks to encourage the sharing of good and innovative practice between schools from different countries.

**Lead practitioners.** Outstanding teachers who are funded to give their time to work with other teachers in their area of the country to share curriculum resources and ideas for improving teaching and learning.

**Special school.** A school that makes special educational provision for pupils with statements of special educational needs (SEN), whose needs cannot be fully met within mainstream schools.

**Specialism.** The curriculum area in which a specialist school chooses to focus. Schools can choose from 10 subject-based specialisms (see page 2), special educational needs or vocational specialism.

**Specialist school.** A school applies to become a specialist school and receives extra funding so that it can provide more courses and better facilities in some subjects. In return for the extra funding, a specialist school is expected to raise standards of student achievement. A specialist school also shares specialist resources and expertise with other schools and provides courses for learners in the local community.

**Specialist system.** A term used by Charles Clarke, former Secretary of State for Education, to describe the time when almost all secondary schools in England would be specialist. The term was used to suggest that groups of specialist schools with different specialisms could work together to provide a higher standard of education than any one school could on its own.

**SSAT consultant head teacher.** Usually a practising head teacher of a secondary school who we have approved to provide advice and support to other schools.

**SSAT consultant school.** A school that we have approved to provide advice and support to other schools, using a range of staff from senior leadership through to expert classroom teachers.

**Trust school.** A state-funded school supported by a charitable trust. The trust is made up of a range of external partners that can include businesses, universities and colleges. The trust appoints school governors and supports the school in a variety of ways to provide new opportunities for young people.

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## Chairman's foreword

We, the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT), are a leading national organisation for secondary education in England and we are responsible for supporting the specialist schools and academies programmes.

As at March 2007, there were 2693 specialist schools in England. Of the 2693 specialist schools, there are:

- 439 arts colleges
- 234 business and enterprise colleges
- 54 engineering colleges
- 92 humanities colleges
- 222 languages colleges
- 249 maths and computing colleges
- 22 music colleges
- 296 science colleges
- 365 sports colleges
- 586 technology colleges
- 93 schools that specialise in two or more subjects (such as arts and engineering), and
- 41 that specialise in special educational needs (SEN).

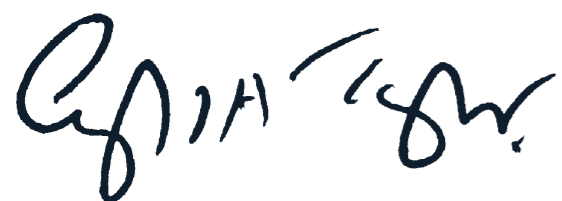
As well as the specialist schools, there were 46 academies, with another 38 expected to open by September 2007.

By 2008 almost all of England's mainstream secondary schools, and a large number of special schools, will have become specialist schools or academies. This will meet the Department for Education and Skills' commitment, as set out in the 'Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners'. This commitment says that 'by 2008 every secondary school which is up to standard should be a specialist school'. Some of these schools will have trust-school status by then and many more will be looking into that opportunity.

Specialist schools and academies continue to use the experience, energy and expertise in business and society in general as a way of raising standards in education. Each year, businesses:

- provide sponsorship worth millions of pounds to specialist schools;
- offer guidance and opportunities to students; and
- make valuable contributions to school management and the curriculum.

I welcome the ambitious plans set out in this document for the next stages in the transformation of secondary education, which will be led by teachers and other education professionals.



Sir Cyril Taylor GBE

Chairman, Specialist Schools and Academies Trust

## Chief Executive's introduction

This edition of the corporate plan builds on our 2006–2007 to 2008–2009 plan, which sets out the framework within which we will continue to work towards our long-term objective for the specialist system.

We are 20 years old this year and the success of our member schools is due to co-operation, a long-term purpose, and a shared belief in student achievement.

Academies and trust schools are part of this new and diverse school system, and our family of schools includes special and primary schools, as well as a growing number of schools in other countries.

Our priority under this plan will be to develop our 'by schools, for schools' approach (see page 5) and to put our working principles into practice. In this way, we will support:

- the development of the specialist system as a 'self-improving' system (in other words, a system in which teachers and education professionals share and develop teaching and learning practices, with a commitment to raising standards);
- school-led system leadership (where head teachers come together to influence and develop education issues, and support schools other than their own); and
- the creation of an environment in which schools can move from 'good' to 'great'.



Elizabeth Reid

Chief Executive, Specialist Schools and Academies Trust



# Our aim, principles and objectives

Our governing council has agreed the wording of the following aim, principles and objectives.

### Aim

'Our aim is to give practical support to transforming secondary education in England by building and enabling a world-class network of innovative, high-performing secondary schools in partnership with business and the wider community.'

### Principles

'We believe in "by schools, for schools". By this, we mean:

- making sure that improving student achievement and raising academic standards are at the heart of everything we do
- making sure that head teachers take the lead in directing our work
- involving head teachers and other teaching staff in designing and delivering our programmes, activities, research and development
- inspiring, challenging and motivating head teachers and other teaching staff to raise standards, and to support and challenge one another
- validating and accrediting educational practices and measuring educational outcomes'

### Objectives





## Objective 1: 'Developing the specialist schools and academies system.'

We will work closely with all English secondary schools to take forward the school reform agenda and raise student achievement, making sure that national, regional and specialist steering groups, made up of head teachers, set the future direction for our work. We will also work closely with primary and special schools in England, and link with schools around the world, to share good practice on teaching and learning.

Our main objectives for the next planning period are to do the following.

### 1 Build and maintain a fully specialist system.

Make sure that 95% of eligible mainstream secondary schools are up and running as specialist schools or academies by 2008. Make sure that 95% of specialist schools meet the standard that the DfES sets for schools to keep their specialist status. Make sure that the high-performing specialist schools programme supports the development of the specialist system.

### 2 Promote and support the trust schools programme.

Promote a broad understanding of, and interest in, becoming a trust school by providing advice and guidance to schools and partners interested in the programme, and by providing direct support to those working towards trust status.

### 3 Support the academies programme.

Arrange educational support for academies through the specialist schools system, involve academies in our networks, and support academy sponsors to help achieve the target of setting up 400 academies.

### 4 Develop international networking.

Develop and support networks of schools in several countries to share good practice between head teachers and other education professionals, which will help to keep the specialist system active worldwide and performing strongly against international benchmarks. Encourage an international aspect across the curriculum in specialist schools and academies.

### 5 Develop the 'family of schools' programme.

Develop and support a network of primary schools through which we can introduce aspects of the specialist schools programme to primary schools, and strengthen the contribution that the specialist schools programme makes to helping students move successfully from primary into secondary schooling.

### 6 Develop a network of special schools.

Support at least 100 special schools in their aim to become specialist by 2008. Develop a network of specialist special schools through which we can encourage co-operation between special and mainstream schools, and so build skills and expertise in special needs education throughout the teaching workforce.

## Objective 2: 'Developing specialisms and subjects.'

We will develop specialist schools and academies as centres of excellence in specialisms, and use networks of specialist schools to improve standards. We will contribute to the teaching and learning of 14- to 19-year-olds, especially through strengthening 'applied learning' (see the glossary) in specialist schools and academies, to raise student achievement and increase the number of young people over the age of 16 who continue in education.

Our main objectives for the next planning period are to do the following.

- 1 Develop specialist schools and academies as centres of excellence in specialisms.**  
Support specialist schools and academies to develop and maintain strong specialisms that help to raise achievement throughout the school and allow the school to share specialist expertise with other schools and organisations.
- 2 Make sure that strong networks of specialist schools and academies, led and directed by head teachers, develop specialisms and subjects.**  
Support head teachers to lead the strategic development of specialisms and subjects, in response to national priorities. Encourage and support schools to develop teaching resources in their specialist area, and contribute to curriculum and qualification development.
- 3 Make sure that specialist schools and academies can lead the improvement of subject teaching across the school system.**  
Support specialist schools and academies to design, develop and deliver subject-based continuing professional development, focusing on teachers with responsibility for leading a subject, and on curriculum and teaching methods across teachers' professional standards.
- 4 Strengthen applied learning throughout the specialist system.**  
Promote high-quality applied learning throughout the specialist schools and academies system. Set up 200 schools with a vocational specialism by 2008, and support all schools in developing applied learning related to their specialism.
- 5 Support the design and introduction of specialised diplomas and associated professional development for teachers.**  
Make sure that specialist schools and academies are represented as specialised diplomas are being developed. Design and set up a training programme, and provide ongoing support networks, to prepare teachers and other education professionals for the diplomas that will be introduced from 2008.

## Objective 3: 'Building and embedding capacity in schools to raise achievement.'

We will work closely with large numbers of schools and academies, whatever their records of examination results, to develop and introduce both tried-and-tested and new practices for raising student achievement, and to develop longer-term plans for transforming learning. We will also build networks of consultant schools and lead practitioners through which to deliver coaching and share expertise, which will help to encourage school-to-school challenge and support.

Our main objectives for the next planning period are to do the following.

- 1 Inspire and support schools to work together to raise student achievement and transform learning.**  
Build networks of schools and teachers through conferences, visits and partnerships so that they learn from and support one another. Examples of where this has been successful include:
  - the Raising Achievement Transforming Learning project
  - the Leading Edge Partnership Programme
  - the Specialist Schools Achievement Programme, and
  - the Academy Support Programme.
- 2 Build the capability of schools to deliver school-to-school challenge and support.**  
Develop a national network of accredited consultant schools and head teachers who have wide experience of student achievement and raising standards. Use consultant schools and head teachers to deliver school-to-school challenge and support by:
  - providing inspiration
  - offering coaching and advice, and
  - sharing tried-and-tested methods for raising student achievement.
- 3 Build networks of outstanding classroom teachers to encourage school-to-school challenge and support.**  
Develop national networks of outstanding classroom teachers, known as 'lead practitioners', across subjects and specialisms, and in areas of schooling that give every child the opportunity to achieve (for example, a network focused on the academic performance of minority-ethnic groups). Use networks of lead practitioners to:
  - share expertise through all our programmes and activities
  - support national educational strategies and programmes, and
  - provide tailor-made support to departments and teachers in specialist schools and academies.

Aim to match our lead practitioner model with Advanced Skills Teacher and Excellent Teacher standards.
- 4 Support schools in using and interpreting data.**  
Develop a range of services to schools to help them develop and follow good practice in their use of achievement data (see the glossary), so that they can tailor teaching and learning to the needs of individual students.

## Objective 4: 'Developing partnerships with businesses and the community.'

We will encourage links between schools, businesses and the community to support student achievement and to support learning and wellbeing within the community. We will build on a growing recognition within businesses that they need to work closely with the education system in certain subjects and skills areas (for example, science and engineering), and also that meeting their social responsibility as employers can contribute to strong business performance.

Our main objectives for the next planning period are to do the following.

### 1 Encourage partnerships between schools, businesses and employers.

Work with businesses, employers and sector-skills organisations, and build on existing relationships with sponsors of specialist schools and academies, to support student achievement through applied learning, personal development education and school management.

### 2 Promote learning in and through the community.

Support specialist schools and academies to work with their local communities and to closely monitor how community work affects educational achievements. Encourage groups of local schools to co-operate when they design and deliver their work with the community, and in this way to more fully meet local and regional education and skills needs.

### 3 Encourage partnerships between schools and higher education institutions.

Support schools and higher education institutions to work together to:

- improve teaching and learning
- support gifted and talented students, and
- encourage students from different social backgrounds to access higher education.

### 4 Encourage partnerships between schools, sixth-form colleges and colleges of further education.

Support and encourage co-operation between schools, sixth-form colleges and colleges of further education to offer opportunities for young people over 16 years of age, and increase the number of young people over 16 who continue in education.

### 5 Encourage schools to get involved in developing regional skills and community regeneration.

Support and encourage schools to get involved in regional plans for regeneration by working with regional agencies and partnerships to deliver shared objectives and targets.

## Objective 5: 'Developing leadership and fostering innovation.'

We will help schools and head teachers to design, develop and deliver leadership and professional development opportunities by drawing on best practice in the specialist schools system. The aim is to inspire teachers to want to become school leaders. We will work with leading academic institutions and education professionals to encourage new ideas through school-based development and research. We will also introduce new and effective teaching and learning practices through our programmes and networks.

Our main objectives for the next planning period are to do the following.

### 1 Support leadership development through the specialist system.

Support specialist schools and academies to design, develop and deliver university-accredited leadership programmes and tailored leadership modules. Promote leadership development through our international networks (see iNet in the glossary), so that head teachers can compare their methods against those used in other schools around the world.

### 2 Provide continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers through the specialist system.

Support specialist schools and academies to design, develop and deliver CPD across a local area or region.

### 3 Encourage school-based development and research.

**Personalising learning:** encourage new thinking and practice on tailoring teaching and learning for individual students across all areas of education. Work closely with large numbers of schools and teachers and through school-based development and research networks.

**New technology in schooling:** arrange for groups of schools to develop, test and introduce new technology, including using achievement data to improve performance, and developing new systems for mentoring students.

**Student involvement:** encourage students to get involved in the way the school is run, use their opinions to help design services and give the students more say in what happens across the education system.

**Parent involvement:** develop new ways of involving parents in their children's learning, through test projects and research in specialist schools and academies.

**The 21st-century school:** aim to make sure that new thinking and practice in the specialist schools system is taken into account when building and refurbishing secondary schools, including in areas such as curriculum design, using new technology and developing the school workforce.

### 4 Build an international academic partnership.

Work with leading academics and other education experts to explore the wider possibilities created by new practices developed in schools, and to show how these practices help to raise achievement and standards.



## Developing our organisation

This plan describes our ambitions for the period from 2007-2008 to 2009-2010. If we are to be successful in the future, we must continue to develop our corporate capabilities to support these ambitions and to support our 'by schools, for schools' way of working.

We have set out our ambitions for our people, systems and procedures below. We will go ahead with these corporate developments based on the following values:

- develop and support all our staff to contribute effectively to our aims and to succeed in their roles
- be open, consult widely and take responsibility for our actions, and aim to fully involve all those with an interest in our work
- maintain high standards of integrity and professionalism, and promote equal opportunities in all areas of our work
- make good use of our resources and get value for money.

### Corporate governance

We will put into practice the findings of the review of our corporate governance, which was carried out by external consultants, to meet the needs of our organisation and demonstrate good practice.

### Corporate development

#### Valuing and developing our people

We will build and develop the capabilities of our staff, and those working with us but based in schools. We will offer more opportunities for career development to experienced education professionals who work for us in schools on short-term contracts or on specific projects. We will also make sure that our staff have similar access to ongoing professional and self-development opportunities to support their careers with us and within the education sector as a whole.

We will encourage education professionals who we employ directly to use their experience with us as an opportunity to develop skills they can take back to schools as they are appointed to leadership roles. In all our work we will support our staff, whatever their background, and encourage a wide range of people to get involved. We will aim to maintain and extend our current Investor in People status. We will review and develop our Race Equality Scheme and introduce a Disability and Gender Equality Scheme.





### Marketing and communications

We will follow a marketing and communications strategy to:

- build support for the specialist schools and academies programmes and all our networks
- share examples of good practice between schools, and
- celebrate schools' successes.

Head teachers and other teaching staff will have a bigger part to play in our communications processes. We will work with Plain English Campaign to achieve their Crystal Mark for some of our main publications.

### Information technology (IT)

We will build an online learning system that helps us to become 'the place to go, the place to be, the place to engage' for teachers or anyone who is involved with or interested in the education system. We are committed to providing everyone in the organisation, especially the head teachers in our steering groups, with access to the information they need to work effectively. We will make sure that more of our information-management systems achieve ISO 27001 (an international standard confirming that the organisation concerned has put in place a system for managing the security of the information it holds), and aim to achieve the ISO 20000 IT service-management standard (an international standard confirming that the organisation concerned delivers high-quality IT services).

### Strategy

We will focus on continuing our development as an organisation made up of member (affiliated) schools and other organisations, developing schools-led programmes and activities, and improving and expanding these programmes so that they influence the whole school system. In developing our strategy we will consult, and be guided by, our national head-teacher steering group, academic associates (we work with leading academics in the education field, from both the UK and overseas) and others with an interest in our work.

We will make sure that our school networks have access to a wide range of leading thinking from academics, businesses and society as a whole, and that the best new practice developed by schools is reflected in the national policy debate. We will continue to use the European Foundation for Quality Management excellence model to guide our development and to measure our progress against.



### Regional networks

We will continue to support regional networks of schools, led and directed by head-teacher steering groups. The regional networks will develop a programme of work that responds to the needs and interests of the region's schools, taking account of regional examination results. We will widen our network of regional offices to support and respond to the needs of schools locally and regionally, and to support local and regional involvement in our national programmes. We aim to set up project teams in regional offices to get better value for money.

### Financial management

We will continue to manage our finances efficiently to help achieve our objectives. We have strong financial systems in place, and in the next planning period we will concentrate on supplying up-to-date financial information for management purposes.

### Workplace standards and environmental management

We aim to achieve the Occupational Health and Safety Advisory Service (OHSAS) 18001 standard for occupational health and safety standards. We will also strengthen environmental good practice across our offices, programmes and activities as we work towards the ISO 14001 environmental-management standard.

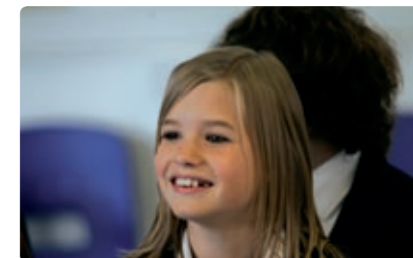
### Our approach to managing risk

We are committed to using risk-management procedures that are consistent with best practice in both the public sector and the commercial sector.

We compare our day-to-day risks against a monthly risk-register analysis, which monitors our financial risk in the current year. Day-to-day risk is also supported by our reserves policy, which is a policy that uses approved methods to make sure that we have enough money to cover any business risk. Strong performance management allows us to manage our day-to-day risk.

We manage long-term risk in two ways:

- by carrying out a risk assessment of our corporate plan every six months, which is reviewed by our governing council's Audit Committee, and
- through our management team tracking the risks we face each month.



## Budget

The table shows a summary of our budget by programme and activity.

	2006-2007 Actual budget £million	2007-2008 Planned budget £million
<b>Income</b>		
DfES Specialist Schools Programme	13.2	13.9
Other DfES programmes:		
Achievement	6.8	6.1
Vocational	3.0	7.4
Academies	3.1	4.1
ICT (information communication technology)	0.4	0.4
Other	1.9	3.4
	<u>15.2</u>	<u>21.4</u>
<b>DfES subtotal</b>	<u>28.4</u>	<u>35.3</u>
Charges for our services	18.8	20.5
Investment income	0.4	0.4
Restricted donations	2.0	1.0
	<u>49.6</u>	<u>57.2</u>