DIVERSE, COLLEGIATE, IMPROVING

BALANCING AUTONOMY,
COLLABORATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY
IN THE ACADEMIES PROGRAMME

BECKY FRANCIS
JULY 2012

www.thersa.org

RSA
Projects

12

Contents

Foreword

This pamphlet, written by my predecessor Becky Francis, seeks to highlight the key issues emerging as a consequence of mass academisation in the English education system, and outline the RSA's model for its emerging family of academies.

Both mass academisation and the RSA's family of academies model are works in progress. The main purpose of this document is to inform debate and encourage discussion about both issues. How can we ensure that academisation brings positive outcomes for all learners? And how can we shape our model in a way that best harnesses the RSA's own assets, expertise and connections, raising achievement within these schools and influencing policy and practice beyond?

The policy terrain is changing rapidly. Changes to the inspection framework and accountability measures mean that many schools which are currently 'good enough' to convert to academy status may be one or two OFSTED visits away from being 'bad enough' to require a coerced, sponsored model. New thinking about what should exist in a 'middle tier' between DfE and schools may alter the role of all academy sponsors. The emerging DfE announcements about the future of the national curriculum from 2014 will also help clarify the rules, boundaries, space for innovation and accompanying accountability structures. This will have a major impact on the relationships between schools, sponsors and the wider educational infrastructure.

The RSA is well placed to make a significant, independent contribution to all these debates. In combining thought leadership and social innovation, we aim to create a virtuous circle between research and practice. For instance, the current RSA-Pearson Think Tank Academies Commission will inform how we develop our family of academies model. Working directly with these Academies gives us insight to which areas of policy need exploring, and provides us with both inspiration for and reality checks on ideas for practical innovations. And the practical innovations we lead with larger numbers of teachers and schools, for instance through our Opening Minds framework and our area based curriculum, also help determine our priorities for future RSA programmes of work.

We are currently developing a three-year programme that aims to turn the RSA into a world leading education think and act tank, connecting even better with the RSA's Fellows and other areas of expertise. Although we already have a strong suite of emerging projects, we are always looking out for new possibilities and partnerships to take these and other ideas forward. Whether you are inspired, perplexed or irritated by this pamphlet, please get in touch if you feel that you might be able to work with us to support our mission - to realise the potential of all learners.

Joe Hallgarten
Director of Education, RSA

About the author

Professor Becky Francis holds a Chair at King's College London as Professor of Education and Social Justice, and works part time at Pearson as Director of The Pearson Think Tank. She has followed a research career focusing on education and social inequalities. Best known for her work on gender and achievement, Becky was a Professor of Education at Roehampton University before taking up the post of Director of Education at the RSA (2010–2012), where she directed the education programme including the development of the RSA Family of Academies. Becky's policy research and analysis includes her recent influential work on 'Satisfactory' schools, in relation to social disadvantage.

Her academic expertise and extensive publications centre on social identities (gender, 'race' and social class) in educational contexts, social identity and educational achievement, and feminist theory. She has written many books on these topics, including the most recent *The Identities and Practices of High Achieving Pupils* (2012, Continuum); and has also co-edited several readers on theory and practice in gender and education, including *The Sage Handbook of Gender and Education* (2006).

Précis

Mass academisation is now a feature of the English education system, especially in the secondary sector, raising a series of questions around accountability and the relationship between accountability and autonomy. This pamphlet seeks to highlight key issues emerging, and to outline the RSA's model for its Family of Academies. The RSA model seeks to mitigate some of the risks of autonomy while harnessing the innovation it brings, by balancing autonomy and accountability in a model premised on school improvement. In this way we hope that we can harness the creativity and professionalism that freedom brings, while maintaining responsibility for outcomes, in the interests of young people.

Introduction

Diversification of state schooling, and freeing schools from Local Authority control, represent core principles underpinning flagship Coalition education policies (as expressed in the Academies and 'Free Schools' programmes). While the Free Schools movement has been slower to develop, the speed of academisation has exceeded all expectations. 'Academies' now include a variety of different models, including sponsor academies, convertor academies, and free schools. Currently 1776[1] schools have converted to academy status, with many more in the process of application.

The academies programme has been controversial, both in its New Labour and Coalition government guises. Removal from local authority maintenance, governance arrangements (including the role of the DfE and Secretary of State for Schools), and the involvement of private sponsors, have all sparked debate.[2] And the coalition government's early focus on 'Outstanding' schools, in contrast to the previous focus on underperforming schools under the New Labour administration, provoked further controversy. However, more recently the coalition has diversified its routes to academisation in a number of ways; extending its offer beyond 'Outstanding' schools to those rated 'Good' by Ofsted but whose reports identified outstanding features, and returning attention to underperforming schools (which can now opt to become academies if federated with an Outstanding school, or which can be taken over by another school or chain).

The speed at which academisation has progressed in the secondary school sector indicates strong support from secondary head teachers and governing bodies. There is no doubt that, in addition to funding incentives, the notion of autonomy appeals to many schools (Reform and The Schools Network, 2012). There have also been many notable success stories in terms of reinvigorating struggling schools and raising attainment (National Audit Office, 2010; Machin & Vernoit, 2010, 2011; Moss, 2011). Specific models are becoming identifiable in successfully generating school improvement and innovation (Hill, 2012). Nonetheless, particular aspects of academies policy remain controversial. These include: the individualism and faith in market solutions reflected in academies policies; the effectiveness of diversification as a method of improving education systems[3] (including the improvement or otherwise of equality of opportunity, as 'Outstanding and Good' schools are disproportionately populated by affluent students; Lupton, 2011; Francis, 2011); local accountability and management given the increasing absence of Local Authority involvement (Curtis et al., 2008; Glatter, 2011; Hatcher, 2011); the impact on schools remaining in the Local Authority system as funds are redirected to individual academies; and the impact on inter-school collaboration.

Such debates will continue, and indeed the RSA will continue to contribute to them. Nevertheless, not only has academisation already become a mainstream feature of the secondary education sector, but the government firmly intends to maintain the momentum, especially in the primary sector. Indeed we are currently experiencing an explosion of change, as individual schools opt for academisation, and existing and new sponsors rapidly increase the number of schools within their chains and federations, and develop their modes of governance and service support offers. Within this unprecedentedly fast-moving terrain, it is arguable that much of the debate has been retrospective, and moreover that there has been a relative absence of analysis of the implications of mass academisation.[4] This paper, however, seeks to consider some of the key benefits and risks in the academies programme with particular attention to issues of autonomy, collaboration and accountability, and to consider best practice in embedding the benefits while mitigating the risks. It also outlines the model being developed by the RSA in a 'Family' of academies that balances these three issues.

Autonomy

One of the academies programme's key appeals has been school autonomy.[5] There is broad if not universal educational consensus that the previous New Labour government tended to micro-manage schools, with by-products of bureaucracy and de-professionalisation. Thus greater autonomy has often been enthusiastically embraced by head teachers, as well as being perceived as a mechanism for system improvement by the New Labour and Coalition governments (see also Clark, 2009). As current Secretary of State for Education Michael Gove (2012) quotes Tony Blair as saying, academies were appealing because,

> "[An academy] belongs not to some remote bureaucracy, not to the rulers of government, local or national, but to itself, for itself. The school is in charge of its own destiny. This gives it pride and purpose. And most of all, freed from the extraordinarily debilitating and often, in the worst sense, politically correct interference from state or municipality, academies have just one thing in mind, something shaped not by political prejudice but by common sense: what will make the school excellent."

In the original 'New Labour' academies, individual sponsors often worked with individual schools. However, given capacity issues, coupled with the eagerness of some sponsors to make a major impact, it was not surprising that 'chains' emerged early on – sponsors taking over more than one school. As Hill (2010; 2012) has discussed, chains had the potential to provide the major capacity and expertise required for a more systematised and resourced approach to school improvement, which was sometimes lacking from individual sponsors. A key identified risk in the emergent academies programme had been accountability (as academies were removed from Local Authority control), and the sufficient resource and expertise required to ensure improvement. Chains appeared a positive development in mitigating these risks.

On the other hand, of course, chains also indicate a loss of autonomy for schools subsumed within them. This is especially the case for 'takeover' schools forced down the 'sponsor route' to academisation (as opposed to 'conversion'). Such schools often have their structure and practices imposed by the sponsor chain, which have developed specific models and ways of working.[6] Such different models are gradually becoming more publically understood and directly associated with particular academies 'brands'. Indeed, some schools may have less freedom in being part of an academy chain than they did under the previous Local Authority arrangement. This may, of course, be a good thing, where schools were stagnating and not being supported to improve. But it does contrast with the vision of autonomous schools articulated by

Blair, above, and Gove's claim that "each school now has the opportunity to take control…" (2012).

Of course, this is not representative of the case for a majority of academies. Since the Coalition turned attention to facilitating autonomy for thriving schools via academisation, the explosion in academy numbers has disproportionately represented these 'converter' schools: schools graded 'Outstanding', or 'Good' with features identified outstanding, by Ofsted. Of the 1529 academies reported by Gove (2012) as open in England on 4 Jan 2012, 1194 were converters and 335 sponsored academies: hence only just over a fifth were sponsored schools (those schools most likely to be found in academy chains). This generates a set of interesting questions. In the tradition of 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it', commentators may ask why schools which were already flourishing required a radically changed approach. Their greater autonomy as academies is significant as they are no longer directly accountable to the local authority, and also will no longer be subject to Ofsted inspections (except in cases where a significant shift in student outcomes is noted, or parents raise concern). Concern has also been raised that instead of Local Authorities, academies are now directly accountable to the Secretary of State for Education (see, for example Glatter, 2010). However, realistically, given the scale of academisation, the extent to which such a relationship can be meaningful is highly doubtful. Indeed, the lack of capacity for meaningful central management of this quantity of individual academies presents a significant, and rapidly-increasing, challenge for the Department of Education.

One of the academies programme's key appeals has been school autonomy

Much more convincing are concerns that the autonomy of converter academies bear two risks: a) the risk to existing quality, given the potential for complacency, the dependence of quality on key (impermanent) figures in the SLT, and so on. b) The risk of autonomy facilitating individualistic, self-interested behaviour on the part of already-successful schools to the detriment of others in the locality (for example, in relation to admissions, exclusions and so on). Gove rejects the latter concern, which he brands "cynical", claiming that instead:

> "Heads, teachers, governing bodies, showed more commitment, more devotion, and a greater sense of moral purpose than the critics gave them credit for. Academies are not islands unto themselves; instead, what we've witnessed is an outpouring of desire to help others" (Gove, January 2012).

Yet in his next paragraph he goes on to state that "Already, 18 converter academies are sponsoring another academy". 18 out of the 1194 converter schools academised at the time of his speech can hardly be described as representing an 'outpouring' of commitment to collaboration with other schools – indeed rather, this underwhelming figure might reasonably be used to suggest that, in the face of direct encouragement from the DfE, most converters are remaining determinedly focused on their own agendas. The figure has since grown to 68 converters that have agreed to become sponsors of struggling schools (the figure in May 2012), showing potential for growth, but these still represent a small number given the scale of expectation.[7]

What we risk is increasing distinction between converters and sponsored schools. My analysis has demonstrated the over-representation

of socially-advantaged pupils in schools rated Outstanding and Good by Ofsted, and the disproportionate number of socially disadvantaged young people in those schools rated 'Satisfactory' or 'Notice to Improve' (Francis, 2011). Statistics cited by Gove that, for example, the percentage point increase in pupils gaining 5 A*–C including Maths and English for sponsored academies was double that of maintained schools – while testament to the success and hard work of these academies – do not represent a meaningful comparison given that these sponsor academies had been failing schools (and thus coming from a low base). What we have, subsumed within the title 'academies', are thriving 'Outstanding' and 'Good' schools that are given autonomy to decide their own directions and content of offer; and sponsor schools that have some limited autonomy to innovate, but the latter is increasingly likely to be shaped (or directed) by a sponsor chain. There is a world of difference between these two models (converter and sponsor), in terms of both level/nature of autonomy, and the situation and likely pupil demographic of the school.

Hence at present academisation cannot be relied on for whole-system improvement. There remains a risk that the autonomy of converter academies (and new Free Schools) will negatively impact local sponsor academies and local authority schools, as converter academies are likely to be especially attractive to parents. In an increasingly competitive scenario, sponsors of individual schools and small sponsor chains may struggle to maintain standards in the face of competition from better-resourced chains, and rapidly rising floor targets and other accountability measures. Already there is anecdotal evidence of local small-scale sponsors being frustrated at the lack of joined-up local innovation (such as the instigation of a Free School on their doorstep), and a lack of acknowledgement of the uphill struggle they face in comparison to the situations for their converter counterparts. Moreover, a large swathe of schools – those rated 'satisfactory' by Ofsted – remain largely excluded from academies policies (being neither of sufficient designated quality to pursue the converter route independently, nor poor enough to be forced down the sponsor route). Yet these schools represent the largest proportion of schools that need improvement (Ofsted, 2011; Francis, 2011). There is at present no mechanism to compel these schools to seek support for improvement, nor for systematised or quality controlled provision of such improvement support (Francis, 2011).[8]

Collaboration

Clearly there are issues arising concerning accountability – both national and local – which I shall address below. However, what of the collaboration and vocationalism among schools that the Secretary of State seeks to nurture?

There is an educational consensus that school-to-school engagement, partnership and information sharing is beneficial for school improvement. The National Challenge was popular, and while not without its limitations it has retrospectively been both widely embraced and demonstrated effective (eg Stuart and Maddern, 2011; Rudd et al., 2011). Funding for the National Challenge was scrapped by the Coalition government, however, Michael Gove makes positive allusion to it in his recent speech (Gove 2012).

As has been argued, mechanisms to secure system-wide improvement ('school-to-school' or otherwise) represent an omission in current education policy: there are initiatives addressing specific problems/areas of the system, but these look patchy. Quangos and prior initiatives have been dismantled, but meanwhile there remain two immediate challenges facing the present system: 1) how to support 'satisfactory' schools to improve; and 2) how to ensure that the current mechanisms for improvement (autonomy for converters and sponsors) 'join up' to secure improvement across the board.

It is the second issue that I seek to concentrate on here. So how to mitigate against the potential individualist and self-interested effects of autonomy and competition in the schools system to ensure that best practice is shared and embedded? The latter requires collaboration and sharing of information. Gradually it would appear that some chains and federations are beginning to talk to one another about best practice.[9] However there is as yet little evidence that chains are learning from one another in any systematic way (Hill, 2010). Moreover, partly because of the level of philanthropic investment represented in discrete chains, and the increasing DfE focus on successful prior outcomes in supplying sponsors with new schools, there is likely to be competition (as well as potential collaboration) between them.

With regard to converter schools, as we have seen, the government hopes that they will partner with or take over struggling schools, becoming sponsors themselves. But thus far only a very small proportion of schools have done so. One may speculate on some obvious explanations for this apparent lack of enthusiasm: converters need to maintain their own capacity and achievement indicators, and their continued success in the competitive system rests upon this maintenance. There is little incentive, then, to become involved with struggling schools (often with more challenging histories/circumstances/demographics than faced by the

converter school), which represents both a potential drain on expertise and capacity, and a reputational risk for the converter school. Governors may be especially attuned to the risks to their school in engaging in such initiatives.

Some converters have nevertheless engaged due to moral commitments, and of course there may also be financial incentives that balance some of the above risks. It is this arrangement that we have drawn out within the RSA's sponsor model. RSA Academies is an 'umbrella trust' that includes both converters and sponsor schools. We use 'Outstanding' schools in the RSA Family of Academies to work as our agents for improvement in struggling schools, using the top-slice from the sponsor route to pay for their services ensuring that the converter school does not risk its own capacity and achievement. RSA Academies intends to function as a genuine facilitator of improvement, collaboration, innovation, and sharing of expertise and best practice. The details of the model will be outlined below, after a word on accountability.

Accountability

Although local authorities are no longer responsible for academies, there are arguably a range of indicators and functions that continue to hold these schools to account. Beyond trustee/governing bodies, there is also a raft of attainment and performance indicators published by the Department for Education, and of course Ofsted will continue to inspect academies (with the caveat relating to 'Outstanding' schools discussed above).

However, as the number of academies increases, so does the inevitability of problems in some individual cases (see eg Harrison, 2012). At present there is little systematisation of control concerning the quality of different sponsors (either in embarking on sponsorship, or in levering improvement in academies that struggle); and already there are issues arising concerning management of local markets where different schools (including existing sponsor academies, new Free Schools and so on) compete for pupils.

As the number of academies increases, so does the inevitability of problems

Recognition that the Secretary of State for Education cannot logistically be directly responsible for intervention/arbitration with all schools in a totally academised system has already triggered debates on the desirability and potential shape of an 'intermediate tier' of management of schools. Two other agendas have also precipitated discussion here: localism (the need to manage local schools markets), and democracy (given that local authority responsibility represented some level of democratic accountability, which is now absent). Incipient debates are already variously in train, then, as to the potential shape of any emergent 'middle tier' of accountability. For example, whether this might comprise a series of centrally-appointed local schools commissioners; or whether such figures (or panels) might be elected; whether existing academy chains might have a role; whether there should be a market for providers; and how/to whom such intermediate groups/individuals should be accountable. The RSA is deeply interested in this issue, and will soon be publishing a separate pamphlet which will include international comparisons for successful schools systems, and recommendations for policy in England (Hill, 2012a). However, my purpose here is not to speculate on preferable approaches, but rather to highlight the challenges that we have sought to mitigate via our RSA Academies model.

RSA Academies: a model to balance autonomy, collaboration and accountability?

The aim of RSA Academies is to develop a mutually supportive family of schools which use innovative practice to improve outcomes for all children, especially those in areas of disadvantage. School improvement is at the heart of the model: RSA Academies will contain both converter and sponsored schools, with struggling schools being partnered with very good and outstanding schools which are able to provide strong practical support for school improvement (this latter arrangement also brings a financial incentive to the 'Outstanding' school to participate in the Family).

RSA Academies is governed through an equal partnership between the schools that join the family and the RSA. RSA Academies has a number of important distinguishing features:

a. A commitment to school improvement, within individual schools, across the Family, and beyond;
b. Association with the RSA's historic brand; and opportunities for innovative linkages, enrichment, and contributions to governance through RSA projects and the RSA's 27,000 Fellows
c. The commitment to social justice and inclusion, and working to the advantage of all children in a locality;
d. The emphasis on student and community voice, encouraging distinctiveness rather than homogeneity in schools within the family;
e. The lack of any particular religious emphasis; and
f. The commitment to collegiate ways of working.

Activities are sustained financially by all academies within the Family paying a modest annual subscription. The RSA also makes an annual contribution of up to £100,000 per annum, to match fund the income from schools. And a top-slice is levered from sponsor schools to pay for the school improvement services provided by highly performing schools within the Family, for the benefit of the academy concerned. In terms of governance of the individual academies within the Family, RSA

Academies follows minority governance arrangements with its converter schools, and majority governance arrangements with sponsor schools. All academies within the Family subscribe to the RSA Academies' ethical principles.

Hence our 'Family' of Academies model facilitates the autonomy and innovation at the heart of the academies vision, by encouraging academies within the family to individually innovate and to share best practice in the group. Enrichment and development is facilitated by school-to-school learning, sharing resources, and pupil and teacher exchanges/joint events. The RSA seeks to mobilise its 27,000-strong Fellowship to support such enrichment activities. We avoid a clearly 'branded' offer, and top-down model; the 'RSA-ness' of our academies being reflected instead in their progressive ethos, innovative approach, collegiality, and commitment to a core set of ethical principles that facilitate social justice. Academies (via representation from head teachers or Chairs of Governors) are evenly balanced with RSA-nominated Trustees on the RSA Academies board, to ensure democracy and proper representation from individual schools. School improvement via a school-to-school approach is centralised and celebrated within the model, with highly performing RSA academies acting as RSA Academies' agents to support struggling schools.

But our model is also intended to ensure accountability, and mitigates potential risks concerning self-interested behaviours among schools. The school-to-school improvement arrangements reflect a collectivist approach that is centralised in our model. This is all about schools learning from one another and sharing good practice. Responsibility is ensured in three ways. Firstly, participating academies sign up to a set of ethical commitments. They include, for example, a commitment to narrowing the socio-economic gap for educational achievement; and a commitment to meeting the needs of all young people in an area, rather than just within the school concerned (generating for example commitments to fair admissions, and to agreements to work with other schools in the locality concerning hard-to-place pupils, and so on).

Secondly, academies within the family are accountable to one another via our school-to-school approach, which means that schools themselves, as members of the RSA Academies Board, take responsibility for peer review and peer challenge. This 'peer review' model offers a middle way between 'top-down' accountability approaches and individualist autonomy. And thirdly, we do of course involve an element of *external* review – the occasional role of an external consultant to provide oversight for quality assurance. This arguably adds an additional incentive for effective internal peer review.

Discussion

There are evident benefits to school autonomy, as the OECD review of successful school systems has illustrated (OECD, 2010). However, this consideration of issues concerning autonomy and accountability in the academies programme also highlights some key risks relating to sustenance of an improving school system.

On some points the RSA has already articulated its position. For example:

There are evident benefits to school autonomy, as the OECD review of successful school systems has illustrated

- That Ofsted should continue to inspect 'Outstanding' schools (Francis, 2012).
- That the government urgently needs to address the challenge of the number of schools 'stuck' at 'satisfactory' by a programme that balances accountability with support (Francis, 2011). Ofsted is moving to address the accountability issues (Wilshaw, 2012); however we continue to assert that without a programme of support these schools will struggle to improve and to embed the professional whole-school culture to sustain improvement. To condemn a swathe of schools as 'semi-failing' without an active support strategy may be counter-productive.
- And we welcome suggestions that sponsors might also be inspected: quality assurance and accountability for sponsors seems imperative, albeit this may impact the quantity and diversity of sponsors seeking to work with schools.

Other questions arising concerning autonomy and accountability in relation to young people's attainment and school improvement via academisation will be addressed in the forthcoming RSA/Pearson Think Tank Commission on 'The impact of total academisation of the schools sector'.

However, what of best practice? The RSA is a 'think and do' tank. We have articulated the RSA's vision as a practicing academies sponsor. Instead of speculative recommendations based on distant/hypothetical analysis, we offer our RSA Academies model as an exemplar of different approach to sponsorship.

What we have designed and articulated represents an alternative to the dichotomy of individualism/top-down intervention. The focus on collaboration, shared commitment to social justice and innovation, school-to-school improvement, and peer review, represents an approach that embraces elements of both autonomy *and* accountability. Creativity and innovation are actively encouraged, but academies participate in a framework where they are accountable to one another, and responsible for children across their locality rather than in their school alone. In this way we hope that we can harness the creativity and professionalism that freedom brings, while maintaining responsibility for outcomes, in the interests of all young people.

Endnotes

1. At 1 April 2012, see DfE: www.education.gov.uk

2. Curtis et al., 2008; ATL, 2010; Glatter, 2011; Mortimore, 2011; Campaign for State Education, 2011. See also the RSA's current work on the potential nature of a new 'middle tier' in the English education system.

3. See for example the latest PISA report (OECD 2010), or the McKinsey report (2010). See eg Allen and Burgess (2011) and Allen and West (2011) for analysis of some of the complexity at stake in notions of 'choice' in relation to school diversity.

4. Something the RSA is addressing with its current Academies Commission in partnership with The Pearson Think Tank, chaired by Christine Gilbert, which explores the potential impact of total academisation on school improvement and student outcomes. The Commission will report in November 2012.

5. Albeit this was trumped by funding incentives as the key reason for schools pursuing academisation, according to the academy principal respondents to the Reform/Schools Network survey (2012). School autonomy was the second most frequently provided explanation.

6. For details of such different practices and strategic objectives among academy chains, and an analysis of emergent best practice (as well as risks), see Hill et al. (2012).

7. It is also worth noting the high percentage of converter academies are in affluent areas, raising equity issues.

8. Albeit, they may be more rapidly forced into Notice-to-Improve status if new proposals from Ofsted are implemented (Wilshaw, 2012).

9. The colloquium hosted by the Cooperative for local academy sponsors (25/1/12) provides an example here.

Appendix

Excerpt from RSA Academies: mission, values and model

1. Purpose

The purpose of RSA Academies is to develop a mutually supportive family of schools focused on school improvement which use innovative curriculum practice to secure the best possible outcomes for every child.

What is going to be distinctive about or fundamental to the RSA family?

- It will focus on raising standards and narrowing the attainment gap for all students.
- It will use the principles of **Opening Minds** as part of a curriculum approach that is broad, rich and deep in the knowledge it nurtures, the skills it develops and the experiences it provides for students.
- Through **student voice** it will empower and involve young people in the development and delivery of their education and the life of their school and the RSA family of academies.
- It will work to increase social justice and **social mobility** by ensuring equality of opportunity, challenging discrimination, narrowing the socio-economic attainment gap and supporting all young people to realise their potential.
- It will listen to and address the **holistic needs** of individual students and, where appropriate and necessary, their families through practical pastoral care and working with other agencies to provide the services and support young people need.
- It will enshrine good behaviour and discipline via **inclusive practices among staff and students** that breed mutual respect, responsibility and cooperation in working to shared ends.
- It will foster **innovative collegiate learning** within and between schools both within and outside the RSA family of academies and across phases of education in order to promote school-to-school improvement.
- It will promote and support **parental engagement** in both their children's and their own learning.
- It will understand the **community context** within which schools operate and foster a culture where students and staff value citizenship, engage with their communities and use the diversity of the family of academies to strengthen social cohesion.
- It will work to a series of **ethical principles** that will underpin relationships with other schools, with staff and with groups in the local community:
  - Operate a **fair admissions** system that does not select pupils on the basis of their ability and includes collaborative protocols with other local schools concerning 'hard-to-place' pupils.
  - Apply an **exclusion policy** that balances the interests of the school with those of others in the area and agrees a common

approach to managing and providing services for pupils with behaviour problems.

- Work for the **educational interests of all children** in the area: taking no actions that are detrimental to other schools, supporting school-to-school improvement and sharing curriculum expertise.
- Practise **accountability to local people** through regular reporting to parents and formally involving parents and wider community in the life and governance of the school.
- Recognise the **right of staff to join a trade union** and be represented by a recognised trade union, including to terms that are no less favourable than those set out in **the School Teachers Pay and Conditions framework** – though respecting the autonomy of individual heads and governing bodies to make the decisions they consider necessary for the welfare of the school.
- Undertaking to develop, nurture and engage with all staff as **creative professionals.**
- Engage with students, employers, higher education and community representatives to develop a **broad, balanced and locally relevant curriculum.**

References

Allen, R. and Burgess, S. (2011) 'Can school league tables help parents choose schools?'. Fiscal Studies, Vol. 32, 2, pp. 245–261

Allen, R. and West, A. (2011) 'Why do faith secondary schools have advantaged intakes? The relative importance of neighbourhood characteristics, social background and religious identification amongst parents'. British Educational Research Journal, Vol. 37, 4, pp. 691–712

ATL (2010) *England's Schools: Not open for business*. London: ATL

Campaign for State Education (2011) *Statement on Privatisation*. Forum, 53(3): 367368

Clark, D. (2009) *The Performance and Competitive Effects of School Autonomy. Journal of Political Economy*, 117, 745–83

Curtis, A., Exley, S., Sasia, A., Tough, S. and Whitty, G. (2008) *The Academies Programme: Progress, Problems, and Possibilities*. London: The Sutton Trust

Francis, B. (2011) *(Un)Satisfactory? Enhancing life chances by improving 'satis-factory' schools*. London: The RSA

Francis, B. (2012) 'The End of Satisfactory Schools'. RSA debate with Sir Michael

Wilshaw and Professor Becky Francis (chair: Greg Hurst), www.thersa.org/events/video/vision-videos/sir-michael-wilshaw-and-professor-becky-francis

Glatter, R. (2011) *Building on shaky foundations*. Education Journal, Issue 129, p.12

Gove, M. (2012) Speech on academies, given at Haberdashers' Aske's Hatcham College. London: 4/1/2012

Harrison, A. (2012) *Lincolnshire academies trust criticised over financial affairs*. BBC, 27/4/12, www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-17870969

Hatcher, R. (2011) *The Struggle for Democracy in the Local School System*. Forum, 53(2): 213224

Hill, R. (2010) *Chain Reactions: A thinkpiece on the development of chains of schools in the English school system*. Nottingham: NCSL

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

Lupton, R. (2010) *Will the coalition's school reforms help the poor?* RSA Comment, http://comment.rsablogs.org.uk/2010/11/17/coalitions-school-reformspoor/

OECD (2010) *Economic Policy Reforms: Going for Growth*. Paris: OECD, www.oecd.org/document/51/0,3343,en_2649_34117_44566259_1_1_1_1,00.html

McKinsey & Company (2011) *How the World's Most Improved School Systems Keep Getting Better*, McKinsey; http://mckinseyonsociety.com/how-theworlds-most-improved-school-systems-keep-getting-better/

Machin, S. and J. Vernoit (2010) *Academy Schools – Who Benefits? Centrepiece*. Centre for Economic Performance. London School of Economics

Machin, S. and Vernoit, J. (2011) *Changing School Autonomy; Academy Schools and their introduction to England's Education*. London: LSE, CEE DP 123

Mortimore, P. (2011) *Markets are for Commodities, not Children*. Forum, 53(3): 339347

Moss (2011) *Seminar on interim research findings on DfE-funded work on sponsored Academies*. Institute of Education, 7/3/2011

National Audit Office (2010) *Department for Education: The Academies Programme*. www.nao.org.uk/publications/1011/academies.aspx

Reform/The Schools Network (2012) *Plan A+: Releasing the Potential of Academies*. London: Reform and The Schools Network

Rudd, P. et al. (2011) *Evaluation of City Challenge Leadership Strategies: Overview Report*. Nottingham: The National College of School Leadership

Stewart, W. and Maddern, K. (2011) *National Challenge closure sparks fears for Disadvantaged*. TES, 25/3/2011

Wilshaw, M. (2012) Francis, B. (2012) 'The End of Satisfactory Schools'. RSA debate with Sir Michael Wilshaw and Professor Becky

Francis (chair: Greg Hurst), www.thersa.org/events/video/vision-videos/sir-michael-wilshaw-and-professorbecky-Francis

The RSA: an enlightenment organisation committed to finding innovative practical solutions to today's social challenges. Through its ideas, research and 27,000-strong Fellowship it seeks to understand and enhance human capability so we can close the gap between today's reality and people's hopes for a better world.

RSA

Projects

www.thersa.org