



the
co-operative
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Co-operative Academies: Stronger together

What are co-operative schools?

Schools now have more choice in what type of ethos and school improvement strategy is right for them. And, there is certainly no shortage of options.



A growing number of schools are becoming trusts and Academies and as a result getting more power to manage their own resources and drive improvement at a local level, often working in partnership with like-minded schools.

Becoming a co-operative school is an option that offers a unique opportunity to create a strong ethos of co-operation that can release untapped potential to drive school improvement, community engagement, and democratic accountability.

There are now 200 co-operative schools in England, including a number of local collaborative clusters, and a growing number of Academies.



How does this work?

Co-operative schools are run using the same values and principles as co-operative enterprises throughout the world – from local co-operative shops to fair trade farms in Africa – with values shared by nearly a billion co-operative members globally. They are democratic organisations where students, staff, parents and other stakeholders can have a voice by becoming members.

The key characteristics of co-operative schools are:

- ▶ A strongly values-driven co-operative ethos.
- ▶ A democratic, co-operative governance model based on stakeholder membership.
- ▶ Strong co-operative dimensions to curriculum and pedagogy.

“The membership scheme and forum offered by the co-operative model will provide the local community with a stronger voice in the education provision in this area and help shape future developments. Their expertise and experience will also strengthen our governance. We endorse the co-operative values and will build on our existing partnerships and work with new partners for the benefit of all our pupils and the local community. The freedoms offered by becoming an Academy bring greater financial security and more options for our small school. We are very excited about it.”

Head teacher, Cumbria

Should your school become an Academy?



Current government policy and changes at local authority level means you may well be considering a new governance model for your school. Whether or not you welcome the pressure to change it does offer an opportunity to choose a structure that is responsive to the needs and challenges of your school and community.

“A group of schools were converting to Academy status here in Plymouth so it was important for us to go at the same time as everyone else. Becoming a co-operative school had opened up a whole new world. It was an awakening for us and we have never looked back. It is through co-operation that we think we can transform and regenerate our urban area. Everyone voted in favour not because they wanted us to become an Academy but because it was seen as a way to carry the co-operative ethos forward, free from interference.”

Head teacher, Devon



Are you struggling to engage your local community in school life?

Are you seeking to embed a strong ethos for the school's future?

A co-operative Academy model may be what you are looking for. Co-operative schools offer an opportunity to create a strong ethos of co-operation in your school which can open up new opportunities to engage local stakeholders in support and development.

The number of co-operative Trust schools across England (currently almost 200) continues to grow. Some of these Trusts, along with other types of maintained schools, are now converting to co-operative Academy status. The co-operative Academy model was developed initially in partnership with a group of co-operative Trust schools who wanted to pursue Academy status, is available to all schools eligible for Academy conversion and to existing Academies wishing to add a strong community and stakeholder dimension. Co-operative academies maintain the essential characteristics of co-operative trust schools:

- ▶ An ethos based on the globally-shared co-operative values – which are included in the definitions in the articles for a co-operative Academy together with a specific values clause.
- ▶ Direct engagement of key stakeholders and the local community in governance through membership and a members' forum.

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“The co-operative movement has a very distinctive ethos around self-help, around self-determination, democracy, equity, fairness. Those are values that we’d want to instil in our young people but they are also the values that we as an organisation want to promote.”
Head teacher, Derby

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Already an Academy?

If your school has already converted to an Academy using the standard articles it can switch to the co-operative model – and become part of the growing network of co-operative schools.



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“When the Government changed the eligibility for Academy status, we felt that the only way we could consider it would be by becoming part of the co-operative network of schools and becoming a co-operative Academy. The values so closely matched our school aim that it was a straightforward thing to win staff, governors and parents to the values and the approach. The values are now going to permeate everything we do. Our communities are to be called Trust, Independence, Democracy, Equality and Solidarity. Our tutor groups are going to take a letter from the word responsibility. We believe that the values will further support our community cohesion and help to lift our outcomes even further. Becoming the first co-operative Academy in London is something which fills us with great pride. We look forward to being a significant part of this network.”

Head teacher, London

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Primary Academies

Co-operative Academies can be set up in primary schools in the same way as they are in the secondary sector, strongly supported by Government.

“This is an exciting opportunity for us to work together across the town for the benefit of our whole community. It builds on our existing relationships and the co-operative ethos also matches closely with our own vision for life-long learning and citizenship”

Primary Head teacher, Sussex

Special schools and alternative provision Academies

Special schools can convert to Academy status and now there is provision for pupil referral units and other forms of alternative provision to operate as Academies. The co-operative model can be applied to these too. The change can be made either as a single institution or part of a multi-school Academy.

Multi-school Academies

Co-operative Academies don't have to be single schools – their whole ethos makes the model ideal for schools who want to go forward in a partnership – which could be based on geographical links, existing partnerships, or to create an 'all-through' educational journey. Legal models are available for multi-Academy and umbrella Academy trusts – and there is flexibility to create a co-operative solution to suit your local context.

Co-operative values

SELF-HELP

In co-operatives, people help each other whilst helping themselves by working together for mutual benefit.

SELF-RESPONSIBILITY

Individuals within co-operatives act responsibly and play a full part in the organisation.

DEMOCRACY

A co-operative will be structured so that members have control over the organisation – one member, one vote.

EQUALITY

Each member will have equal rights and benefits (according to their contribution).

EQUITY

Members will be treated justly and fairly.

SOLIDARITY

Members will support each other and other co-operatives

“Co-operative schools ensure social justice for all. The next step for raising achievement is getting parents and the community involved in learning.”

Head teacher, Cornwall



The Schools Co-operative Society

Head teachers, senior leaders and staff from co-operative schools share experience and expertise through the Schools Co-operative Society, its members include a number of high performing schools, NLEs, LLEs and training specialists. The Schools Co-operative Society is a co-operative owned and democratically controlled by co-operative schools and supported by the Co-operative Group, Britain’s biggest co-operative, and the Co-operative College, an educational charity. Its remit includes exploiting the benefits of joint procurement, sharing expertise from curriculum development to school improvement and giving co-operative schools a voice in the national education policy agenda.

“The idea that we can have this network that encompasses so much – all of our values and a local, national and global focus – is really exciting for me. For other schools that perhaps feel isolated, here is a big family.”

Head teacher, Southampton





International links

Co-operative schools are part of the global co-operative movement, which has more than 1 billion members worldwide in every sector of the economy. Co-operation is playing a key role in reforming services, building communities and dealing with social problems in countries from Sweden to Malaysia, Spain to North America.

Dame Pauline Green, President of the International Co-operative Alliance, told delegates at the 2011 co-operative schools conference:

“You are part of a huge global family of co-operatives all across the world. The mood is right.”

What support is available?

The Co-operative College offers a comprehensive package of consultancy and project management services to support schools throughout the process of conversion. We would be pleased to discuss any needs related to your school's conversion in detail with you.

The model Memorandum and Articles of Association for co-operative Academies are available to download from the Department for Education website at:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/academies/becominganacademy/b0061866/supporting-documents-for-schools-converting-toacademies/model-memorandum-and-articles-of-association/cooperative-articles>



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