

Northern Education Associates Ltd

Guidance to the Trustees of the Northern Education Trust on the Principles Underpinning the Sponsorship of Academies

Background

The Northern Education Associates company board gave approval to the setting up of an independent not-for-profit charity named 'The Northern Education Trust' with responsibility for considering the provision of sponsorship to schools becoming academies and the oversight of them.

It was agreed by the Board that any proposals to sponsor an academy should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

The Board noted that the company has important relationships with local authorities, and with their communities of schools, and that any consideration of an invitation to sponsor a school to become an academy the Trust must take account of these long-term relationships.

The following is a guide to the process of decision-making about whether or not to become the sponsor of any school to become an academy.

1. Consideration of an invitation to sponsor an academy

There will be a process of consideration which will seek out, and take into account, the following:

Views of others

- the views of the current Board of Governors of a school;
- the views of the current Headteacher and Leadership Team of the school;
- the views of the school's local authority toward Northern Education becoming a sponsor;
- the views of the headteachers and governing bodies of other schools in the locality and within the local authority;
- the views of any other agencies or organisations currently working in partnership with the school;
- the views of any key community leaders identified through the consultation process.

These views will be a vital part of the evidence to be used by the Trust to evaluate:

- any potential conflicts of interest;
- any factors likely to negatively impact upon the relationships with a local authority or its schools;
- any factors likely to detract from the reputation of the company;
- the human factors that are likely to lead to a successful transition to academy status.

Analysis of educational trends and financial viability

There will be a process of consideration that takes into account the following:

- analysis of achievement trends over the past 3 years and of current projections for improvement
- the latest Ofsted inspection or monitoring visit reports
- the student intake forecasts on current trends against an analysis of the data about the total student population for an area
- an analysis of the current financial position of the school and its staffing costs;
- an analysis of the funding model for sustaining the proposed academy;
- an analysis of the accessibility of the school to the communities it serves;
- an analysis of the ease of access to the appropriate workforce of high quality teachers;
- An analysis of the condition of the fabric of the school building and its site and the associated costs for maintaining its functionality.

These factors will be a vital part of the evidence to be used by the Trust to evaluate the viability of the school to:

- improve its profile of achievement;
- improve the quality of teaching and learning and sustain it at a high quality level;
- sustain or increase the intake of students to capacity, or near to it, within 3 years;
- be staffed by appropriately qualified and skilled staff;
- be allocated appropriate funding that will secure improvement;
- be allocated sufficient funding to maintain the condition of the buildings and other assets (e.g. IT).

Any overall judgement about whether to proceed toward the sponsorship of an academy must balance:

- i) the evidence that the long-term interests of young people in a school will be best served via a sponsored academy with the Trust's ability to secure sustainable improvement

with

- ii) the potential of the company to sustain and maintain good relationships with its key partners or potential partners.

and

- iii) any potential for sponsorship negatively impacting upon the reputation of Northern Education for integrity or its ability to sustain improvement of outcomes over time.

Evidence suggesting that any one of these conditions cannot be met should weigh heavily upon any decision to proceed to sponsorship.

Decision-making process

The Trust will expect to receive a report from the Education Director of the Trust outlining the judgements using the above guidance and the appropriate risk analysis. This will be used to assist the Trust in coming to a decision about any determination to proceed with planning to establish a new academy.

2. The conduct and oversight of a chain of academies

Northern Education will expect to maintain close working relationships with all those agencies with an interest in the education of young people. The Trust will therefore expect any academy that it sponsors to:

- provide a termly report on the progress of the Academy toward improving achievement to the Director of Children’s Services and the Portfolio holder with responsibility for securing the education of children and young people. We would expect this to include an opportunity for formal meeting that enables discussion and challenge.
- work as a member of the family of schools within the local authority and to positively contribute to the development of good practice by taking part in appropriate programmes of activity designed for the education and welfare of young people;
- work collaboratively with other agencies supporting the development and welfare of young people in the locality;
- work with industry, commerce and voluntary organisations to support the re-generation of an area;
- ensure that any monies top-sliced from academy budgets are used to provide efficient and effective services in support of academies and the improvement of students’ outcomes.

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