

# RSA

Academies

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## RSA Academies' Strategic Plan April 2015 – July 2018

Fulfilling potential  
Achieving excellence  
Broadening opportunity

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# Foreword from the Chair of RSA Academies

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The Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce has inaugurated a charity which seeks to support and enrich the experiences and possibilities of children and young people in a group of academies in the West Midlands – RSA Academies (RSAA). The academies serve communities in Redditch, Coventry, Tipton and Handsworth, and have a high proportion of children from lower income families. The schools are a vital connection between the RSA and education, as they provide a real context to develop ideas about what the curriculum should be like and what excellence means, and the schools benefit from the creative, cultural and social ideas and resources of the RSA.



Over the next three years RSA Academies will develop and demonstrate a distinctive vision of what it means to provide an exceptional education to children and young people. We recognise the centrality of academic success and the development of skills and competences, both of which enable young people to thrive and progress in their learning and in the world of work. This strategic plan outlines the areas we consider fundamental to developing learners who are creative and practical, who love learning and who are able to make their way in the world.

RSA Academies is committed to social justice for our young people. This means getting the very best outcomes for all children, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, whatever their starting point. We seek to broaden horizons and make more possible for our learners, both as they progress through schooling and on their path afterwards. RSA Academies encourage all children to participate in a wide range of academic and extra-curricular opportunities to develop knowledge, skills, interests and networks that will raise aspirations and help them achieve their ambitions.

RSA academies are self-governing, each with their own governing bodies. RSAA's way of working is to share and develop partnerships across the schools at all levels – between the Principals, staff and students – to provide school-to-school support for improving all aspects of schooling including teaching, resourcing, organising, and building success. RSAA's small central team and the Creative Learning and Development Team in RSA offer ideas, practical projects, perspectives and connections which encourage forward and outward looking teachers and students. The Fellows of the RSA are valued partners in this work.

This strategic plan aims to help our academies to grow young people's creativity, cultural understanding, practical skills and their knowledge of the world and to bring forward evidence of what matters in young people's learning.

**Sue Horner**  
Chair, RSA Academies

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# Foreword from the Chairman of RSA

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The progress made by RSAA over the last three years has been impressive. Our academies' leaders and teachers are working more collaboratively than ever before. New opportunities to support young people's learning and wider aspirations are growing, fuelled by flourishing connections between the schools and the RSA's own programmes, Fellows and wider contacts. The impact is showing in exam results and Ofsted reports, in the increased number of pupils choosing to come to RSA academies, and in a growing public interest in our schools. At a time when schools could easily retreat into a more inward-looking approach, I commend all our RSA academies for continuing to stay true to their values, and offering a far broader conception of what schools and learning should be for.

RSAA's new plan dovetails perfectly with the RSA's own strategic review. Building on our mission for a '21st century enlightenment', the RSA believes all should have the freedom and power to turn their ideas into reality. Our focus on unleashing the 'power to create' is reflected in our three change aims:

- 1. Public Services and Communities:** A shift in power to people and communities so that they can better meet their social and economic needs and aspirations
- 2. Economy, Enterprise and Manufacturing:** Unlocking creativity to enable a sustainable, inclusive and dynamic economy
- 3. Creative Learning and Development:** To close the creativity gap: transforming attitudes and practices to enable everyone, regardless of background, to generate original, valuable ideas and make them happen.

Our investment in RSA Academies is a key plank of our strategy. Together, we can test replicable new ideas, understand their impact on learners, and influence the practices of many more schools. Working with the RSA Academies Teaching School Alliance we can work in very different ways with teachers to give them the design and enquiry skills to practise disciplined innovation. And with brave leadership from the RSAA board, we can continue to challenge current orthodoxies about the purposes and practices of schools. Most importantly, we can give young people in our academies as many opportunities as possible to experience the 'power to create', in ways that can contribute to their learning, well-being and future fulfilment. Working together, we can show how closing

the creativity gap can also contribute to narrowing attainment gaps and fostering broader outcomes.

The RSA's commitment to RSAA is not only financial. Guided by the ambitions in both our strategic plans, we will support RSA academies to become exemplar creative institutions. We will create a small number of specific programmes with our academies, leveraging additional funding and partnerships. We will engage academy leaders and teachers as early and often as possible in our emerging programme of thought leadership and practical interventions, reinforcing their position as ideal sites for research and innovation across all our three change aims. We will connect academies carefully with Fellows and other people and organisations whom we believe can add value. We will help to raise the profile of our academies locally, nationally and globally. And we will work more closely with the RSA-appointed governors so that they can maximise their impact and influence. Through a spirit of dynamic collaboration and critical friendship, and a rigorous approach to understanding impact, I believe that our Family of Academies is poised for a creative, successful and exciting future.

**Vikki Heywood**  
Chairman, RSA



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# An introduction to RSA Academies

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The RSA is an influential organisation, with a strong history of informing education policy and practice. From its work to launch national exams in 1856, to work on education for industry in the 1970s, to the more recent development of the Opening Minds curriculum, the RSA has brought an innovative and creative approach to improve education for pupils within a broader approach to promoting social justice.

RSA Academies was established as a charitable company by the RSA in September 2011 to develop a distinctive vision of what it means to provide an exceptional education to children of all ages. The Charity's objects are, "to advance the education of the public including, but without limitation, through the establishment and operation of academy schools". We intend to build a body of evidence showing the ways in which our distinctive approach improves both traditionally measured academic success and life chances by enabling children and young people to thrive in the next stages of their education and on into employment.

RSA Academies is the only area of work which the RSA has a long-term commitment to investing its own funds in, until at least 2017. It is also unique as the only current project to have been set up as a separate charity, with a legally permanent relationship, via RSA Academies, with the three schools that are sponsored. Over the last three years the number of RSA academies has grown steadily, both in terms of the number of schools in the Family and the range of programmes undertaken across those schools.

A deep, permanent relationship between the RSA and a small number of schools in England is expected to make a vital contribution to the RSA's strategic goals, as well as bringing connections and a range of practical benefits to the schools and their pupils. The academies can make an especially powerful contribution to RSA's three creative learning and development objectives: creative learners; creative educators; and creative institutions and systems. More broadly, the RSA academies can represent the RSA's social mission and values in action on a day-to-day, long-term basis. By working together, the schools and the RSA can learn from one another, ensuring that the RSA's work in education informs and is informed by experience on the ground, and bringing the potential for a lasting and meaningful impact on education practice and policy.

Our approach is founded on the basis of a partnership of equals between the RSA and the schools in the RSA Family of Academies. These are the two key funders of RSA Academies and form an important part of the RSA Academies Board. RSA Academies operates as an umbrella

trust rather than a multi-academy trust, which means that schools retain their own governing bodies. This governance model represents a third way between the multi-academy trust approach taken by the large majority of academy chains and the independence of stand-alone convertor academies, and brings a unique set of benefits. It means that schools are able to share ideas and provide support and challenge to one another, whilst also retaining the autonomy and flexibility to take decisions that are in the interests of their own particular local communities.

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# RSA Academies' mission

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## RSA Academies' mission

We aim to provide an inspirational education for all pupils which relates their learning to the wider world, provides experiences which broaden horizons, and enables children and young people to develop the skills needed for success and personal fulfilment.

In our classrooms young people are asked to be creative, imaginative and practical, are challenged to be the best, and are encouraged to show initiative, enthusiasm and leadership skills.

We will achieve our ambitions by securing:

- Excellence in learning
- Pupils who are creative and turn their ideas into action
- The development of skills and networks for the future
- Creative, resourceful teachers providing challenging and stimulating teaching
- Increased impact, locally and nationally

*We were really inspired, and wanted to go to University there ourselves so we are going to work really hard so that we can*

Daniel Langham and Aaron Davies, pupils at Ipsley CE RSA Academy after their visit to Warwick University

To ensure our children and young people succeed we support them in three key areas. We build pupils' academic and vocational capital, as measured by success in qualifications and other formal assessments. We help children and young people to gain the wider set of skills and knowledge they need to thrive in their continuing education and the world of work, so developing their social capital. And we ensure that children have opportunities to be creative and take responsibility and act independently at all stages of their school careers, and in all subject areas, which supports the development of their cultural capital. By supporting these three strands we will give both pupils and teachers in RSA academies the ability to turn their ideas in to action – what the RSA describes as the 'power to create'.

Over the next three years RSA Academies will develop this distinctive vision of what it means to provide an exceptional education to children of all ages. We will gather evidence showing how this approach improves both traditionally measured academic success and children's life chances, enabling them to progress successfully into the next phase of education and into a rewarding and enjoyable working life.

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# Strategic objectives for 2015/18

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## Excellence in learning

All pupils at schools in the RSA Family of Academies will make excellent progress in their learning, both academic and vocational, throughout their school career, and develop a love of learning and a confidence in their ability to do new things that stays with them into adult life.

It is more important than ever before that children in our schools make strong progress throughout their school careers, securing the best possible academic and vocational qualifications. Today's children will move into a world of work that is truly global. This means that there is a premium on the development of skills and aptitudes that cannot easily be automated, or outsourced to someone willing to work much more cheaply elsewhere. Individuals will need greater resilience and adaptability to be able to cope with volatile labour markets and the diminishing likelihood that they will stay in the same job or even the same type of job for the whole of their working lives.

An exceptional education is particularly important for children from lower income families. Nationally the gap between richer and poorer families is apparent at every stage of children's education. Schools in England also generally do badly by children who fall behind national averages – not only do they fail to 'catch up' with their more advanced peers, but too often children in this position fall further behind. RSA Academies is determined that *all* children in the schools make the best possible progress, whatever their starting point and whatever their socio-economic background.

We will seek to maximise the academic achievements of pupils in our schools at all points from early years to post 16, providing opportunities to stretch the most able, and recognising that some of the pupils in the RSA academies will benefit from really strong vocational pathways, whether delivered in school or through partnerships with local colleges and employers. Opportunities for vocational learning should also be seen as important part of the curriculum offer for all pupils, not only those who are less academically able.

Trends towards globalisation make it important that children develop an understanding of their place in the wider world. The schools currently within the RSA Family of Academies all already have connections with schools and charities overseas, and over the period of this plan we will look for additional opportunities for children to develop their identities as 'global citizens'.

Parents are a child's first teachers, and play a crucial role in supporting their child's learning. Once children start school, and particularly when they move to secondary school, parents may feel they do not have enough information about what their child is doing at school to be able to help effectively, or lack confidence in their own skills to assist. Over the next three years we will, as part of each of our projects and programmes, consider whether and how parents can be meaningfully involved. We will also work to find different and better ways of working between parents, teachers and children to achieve the very best outcomes.

By July 2018 we expect to see:

- Pupils in RSA academies make good progress in their learning throughout their school careers, and reduced gaps in attainment between different groups of pupils
- Surveys show that pupils enjoy their learning, and show increased levels of confidence and enthusiasm in applying their learning in different contexts
- High levels of participation in an increasing range of educational opportunities offered by the schools and through the partnership with the RSA
- Pupils have access to a relevant, exciting and challenging curriculum which enables them to develop their creative capacities by engaging with real world problems and seeing how their learning relates to the world beyond the school gates

### **Pupils who are creative and turn their ideas into action**

Children and young people will develop their creative capacities and have opportunities to turn their ideas into real and meaningful action at all stages of school from early years to post 16, and across the full range of subject areas. They will have access to high quality arts and design provision, opportunities for practical learning, and experience of social and commercial enterprise, reflecting the RSA's historic focus on arts, manufactures and commerce.

Head teachers and governors are under more pressure than ever to secure the best possible league table position for their school. There is growing evidence nationally that, in some schools, opportunities to study a full range of arts and design subjects, and to experience a fulfilling programme of enrichment activities, are being squeezed out.

We believe that access to high quality art and design subjects and opportunities to work creatively and on projects that are relevant to the real world are essential at all stages of a pupil's school career, from early years to post-16, and across all subject areas. Learning in this way helps young people to develop the skills and competences alongside the knowledge they need to make strong progress in school and also to make a successful transition to their continuing education and high quality employment. However, the evidence for this is currently disputed – over the next three years we need to collect evidence about the most effective ways of using high quality arts provision and opportunities for creativity to improve academic and wider outcomes for pupils.

By July 2018 we expect to see:

- Increased opportunities for, and take up of, high quality art and design opportunities in both the core curriculum and enrichment activities
- Raised attainment in relevant subject areas
- RSA academies have a growing reputation regionally and nationally as the place to learn or teach if you are interested in arts, design and creativity in education
- A range of pupil-initiated small business and community projects being developed in each of the schools
- Success in external fund-raising to support this strand of work

### The development of skills and networks for the future

Pupils will develop a wide range of skills and the knowledge of the world beyond the school gate to enable them to thrive in their continuing education, the world of work, and in society. Former pupils of the schools in the RSA Family of Academies will have access to a strong network of alumni.

A significant number of children in the areas served by schools in the RSA Family of Academies have very limited social capital – in some cases children will have few contacts who can help them understand the range of careers or University options. Their horizons are therefore limited. An important part of our approach is to use partnerships with Colleges, Universities and training providers, with businesses and other employers, and with RSA Fellows, to raise aspirations and give pupils the knowledge, confidence and contacts that will help them to succeed in their chosen field. These partnerships help pupils to see how what they are learning relates to the world beyond the school gate, and to get a sense of the University, community, and work opportunities that might be open to them.

We also want to make the very best of the skills, interests, and networks of parents at the school in order to expose pupils to a wider range of experiences and to build and increase the opportunities for children to gain an understanding of the world beyond the school gate.

It is also the case that the transition from school to high quality employment is longer and more difficult than ever before, with high youth unemployment amongst both graduates and non-graduates, and the use of unpaid internships making it harder for young people from lower income families to secure a good job whether or not they have a degree. As part of our distinctive approach, we will develop a strong alumni network of former RSA academies pupils (both primary and secondary), who will not only provide role models for pupils at their old schools but also give one another a network of peer support, connected to the RSA Fellowship.

An important strand of this work is to enable pupils to develop the range of skills and competences that will enable them to be effective leaders. They need great communication skills including in public speaking, participation in teamwork and the ability to work effectively with others to plan and implement a real world project.

*They have become more organised, motivated and focused since taking part in the Broadening Horizons Mentoring project*

Bernadette Pettman, Assistant Principal at Arrow Vale RSA Academy

By July 2018 we expect to see:

- Robust information about the educational and career pathways of former RSA academies students shows an increase in the proportions moving on to College, University and apprenticeships and a reduction in those not in education, employment and training (NEET)
- An innovative and increasingly cross-academies programme of high quality and age appropriate information, advice and guidance, incorporating mentoring, careers advice, work-place and University visits taking place in all our schools, starting with the youngest pupils
- A strong and growing network of active RSA Academies' alumni providing a network of support for one another and supporting current pupils at the RSA academies
- Effective partnerships with the RSA Fellowship, Universities and employers supporting this priority

### **Creative, resourceful teachers providing challenging and stimulating teaching**

In order to provide an exceptional education to pupils we will prioritise the development of high quality educators within the RSA Family of Academies. Our teachers will be encouraged and challenged to be creative, engage with relevant research, and be confident in testing out new approaches to enrich pupils' learning, and, as a result of this approach, they will deliver inspiring teaching and also feel trusted and appreciated.

The recruitment and retention of teachers is an increasing challenge nationally and amongst schools within the RSA Family. The School Teachers Review Body note that recruitment and retention pressures on schools have become more acute over the last year. Surveys by the head teacher unions report widespread difficulties in recruiting both high quality NQTs and experienced classroom teachers.

Within this national climate it is particularly important that RSA academies are seen as great places to grow and develop as a teacher. We will offer an exceptional programme of continuous professional development and learning opportunities and a supportive environment in which to develop as a teacher. An important element of our approach is to ensure that teachers are supported and encouraged to be creative in the classroom and to use evidence to test and refine the practices they are developing in the light of evidence from pupils' responses.

## Case Study: Research rich schools

In May 2013, the RSA and British Educational Research Association (BERA) launched a joint inquiry into the role of research in teacher education. The final report, published in April 2014, sets out 10 principles and 20 recommendations to build capacity for research-rich schools in a self-improving education system, based on an extended programme of professional learning and development that begins with initial training and induction and continues throughout teachers' professional career.

The work of the BERA-RSA inquiry has informed the aims and approach of RSA Academies to developing research rich schools, which we have taken further by participating in local and national projects.

In December 2014, the RSAA teaching school alliance was commissioned by the National College of Teaching and Leadership to coordinate a collaborative project with 14 other alliances across the country, to develop a framework and make practical suggestions on how research can best be developed, expanded and embedded within schools and wider partnerships.

Reflecting on the success of the collaborative project, Mat Carpenter, Vice Principal of the RSA Academy said, *"Developing a collaborative typology has encouraged reflection on our own practice in R&D whilst providing inspiration through the endeavours of the other schools"*.

In July 2014 we were approved to establish an RSA Academies Teaching School Alliance, alongside the three NCTL (National College of Teachers and Leaders) designated National Teaching Schools, Whitley Academy, Arrow Vale RSA Academy, and Holyhead School. The Teaching School Alliance supports the delivery of a coordinated programme of initial teacher training, teacher and subject leadership development, talent management and succession planning, school to school support, and teacher research and development. The RSA Academies Teaching School Alliance will reflect the particular ambitions and distinctive vision of RSA Academies. It will give a high profile to research-rich teacher development, support and encourage disciplined innovation, and deliver a high quality offer in those subjects most closely aligned with arts, manufacturing and commerce and with the work of the RSA's Creative Learning and Development team, for example on spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.

By July 2018 we expect to see:

- The RSA Academies Teaching School Alliance recognised as one of the leading Teaching School Alliances in the country, with RSA academies seen as prestigious places to train as a teacher and continue one's teaching career
- High levels of staff satisfaction with strong staff recruitment and retention
- Staff reporting access to high quality continuous professional development and learning, and opportunities to work meaningfully with colleagues in other schools
- A growing number of teachers engaged in research projects and work on curriculum design, and research and curriculum development

- Work carried out within RSA academies increasingly shared with a wider audience
- Great teaching resulting in pupils making excellent progress

### Increasing impact, locally and nationally

RSA Academies' vision for an exceptional education will be shared not only within the growing group of schools that choose to join the RSA Family but also by a much wider network of schools in the West Midlands, nationally, and internationally. Information about innovative practices – designed, developed and evaluated in our academies – will be shared with other schools, and begin to influence education policy and practice more widely.

The RSA Family of Academies currently comprises five schools in the West Midlands. Collaborative school to school work is a key benefit of membership of the Family, and the group would benefit from some additional schools to add capacity as well as to address the current gap whereby we only have one school working with primary age pupils. Working with a larger number of primary schools will give the RSA a more complete understanding of current issues in education. Bringing in a small number of additional schools will also add breadth and diversity to the programmes that RSA Academies runs across the family of schools.



Over the next three-year period we therefore intend to continue to recruit more schools, increasing to 7–9 secondary schools and their local primary schools, so up to 15–20 schools in total. Given the enormous practical benefits to pupils and staff of the schools being closely geographically located we will continue to work with schools in the West Midlands only. In order to bring the benefits of working with the RSA to communities and families, we look to build strong relationships with the feeder primary schools of those secondary schools already in the Family.

One of the reasons that the RSA established RSA Academies was to have a meaningful impact on practice in schools. For the last three years the main focus has been on making a difference to the schools in the RSA Family. During the period of this strategic plan, we wish to see approaches and initiatives developed and piloted within the RSA academies shared with and adopted by many more schools in the West Midlands, nationally and internationally.

The new RSA Academies Teaching School Alliance provides one mechanism for sharing this emerging good practice through the professional learning opportunities, training, and school to school support offered by the alliance. RSA Academies will also work closely with the RSA's Creative Learning and Development team to identify opportunities to share and promote our vision of an exceptional education and the practical steps we are taking to make this a reality to a wider national and international audience of practitioners and policy influencers.

By July 2018 we expect to see:

- A Family of 15–20 schools across the West Midlands all committed to RSA Academies' distinctive approach and working effectively with one another and with the RSA;
- RSA Academies recognised and quoted by educationalist and policy makers for its unique and effective arrangements for working with a group of schools, with some of the core elements of our approach adopted by a growing number of schools;
- High and increasing levels of recognition and support amongst RSA Fellows for RSA Academies, and its relevance to the wider work of the RSA.

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# Our distinctive approach

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RSA Academies is founded on the basis of a partnership of equals between the RSA and the schools in the RSA Family. By working as an umbrella trust rather than a multi-academy trust we are able to bring the benefits of collaboration whilst also allowing schools to retain the autonomy and flexibility to meet the needs of their particular communities. The ‘power to create’ is central to the relationship between RSA and the schools in the Family, and also to our wider strategic partnerships. Through these partnerships we hope to give the widest range of people working in and with our academies – teachers, pupils, Fellows, RSA colleagues and those working in partner organisations – the opportunity to develop and turn into action ideas that will benefit children at our schools.

The relationship with the RSA brings the opportunity for RSA academies’ pupils and staff to work with some of the RSA’s 27,000 Fellows. Over the last three years more than 100 RSA Fellows from the West Midlands and beyond have worked with the academies in a wide variety of ways, including as school governors and Trustees, as mentors for pupils, by giving careers talks and conducting mock interviews, and by contributing to our student leadership programmes. The relationship has also enabled RSA academies to work with the RSA’s Royal Designers for Industry (RDIs), particularly benefitting art and design pupils and teachers.

## Case Study: working with a Royal Designer for Industry (RDI)

Engineering designer Charlie Paton RDI worked with Year 13 students of the International Baccalaureate in Design Technology. The students were working on their final project of the course which accounted for 40% of their marks. They needed to manufacture a prototype of a product and produce a 40 page project. The project ideas were broad, from football dugouts, to portable lecterns, to Romney House lights.

Charlie began his visit with a talk about his design career which began in lighting through to his current company creating Seawater Greenhouses. He then spent time with each student discussing their project and suggesting further areas of their design research and development.

This was Charlie’s first visit to a school as a professional designer and he commented *“I was most impressed by the team of students. They each demonstrated enthusiasm and passion for their chosen design tasks and they also had a keen understanding of the practical design issues involved in developing their solutions.”*

Feedback after the session from one of the students gives an indication of their new insights, *“Charlie has suggested many ways in processing different design ideas to target and meet the design specification. Overall, this will improve my project as I have a variety of design ideas.”*

RSA Academies has formed a number of strategic partnerships with organisations to make sustainable and lasting change. Our partnership with Warwick University has provided opportunities for pupils from age nine upwards to visit Warwick University and to participate in projects with academics at their own school. From 2015 RSA Academies will also benefit from an Economic and Social Research Council funded student-ship jointly supported by Warwick University and RSA Academies, which will look at the impact of friendship groups on pupils' aspirations.



We also have a developing relationship with the Royal Shakespeare Company, and we are facilitating links between a number of Arts organisations in Birmingham and the RSA academies through the establishment of a Performing Arts Hub. Supported by the Comino Foundation, and in partnership with the Black Country Atelier, our 'manual of modern making' project is helping schools to make the most of new digital fabrication technologies.

This spirit of partnership extends to the way in which RSA Academies works with pupils, parents and staff. An important priority for RSA academies, individually and as a group, is to give pupils the opportunity to have a meaningful involvement in decisions about their school. Bringing together students from across the RSA group of schools has provided new opportunities for the pupils to learn from other schools and develop their leadership skills, influencing not only their own schools but also the RSA Family and, indeed, the RSA itself.

## Case Study: Pupil voice

In November 2014 the RSA agreed to take part in the nationwide Takeover Day for the first time, inviting 60 RSA Academy through its doors to 'take over' the RSA. The aim of Takeover Day is to give young people the chance to get involved in organisations and have their opinions heard, so we asked all students to think about the following questions throughout the day: 'what have you seen/learnt the RSA do well?', 'what should the RSA do differently?', and 'what ideas has this morning given you about things you could do in your school?'.

Many were impressed with the history and grandeur of the RSA building and enjoyed the various spaces with comfy sofas and free wifi dotted around, with suggestions that this should be available back at the schools. However, it was also recommended that the RSA should put on more events for young people -as a result of which the RSA hosted its first ever event by and for young people on climate change in March 2015.

Parents are seen as crucial partners in their child's education, and also as potential contributors to the life of the school through their knowledge, skills, experiences and contacts. This resource is largely untapped, and over the period of this plan we will seek improve our ways of working with parents to secure the best possible outcomes for their children and others in the school.

The substantial majority of a school's budget is spent on staffing, and the teaching and non-teaching staff are the people who can actually deliver RSA Academies' vision for an exceptional education. An important element of our vision is to unleash the 'power to create' amongst teachers as well as pupils, enabling staff to turn their ideas for improving outcomes for children into action.

Central to our approach is a robust programme of research-informed enquiry, innovation and evaluation. An important element of the RSA Academies' approach is to explore what might work as well as to learn from evidenced best practice. Our model of 'disciplined innovation' recognises that it is essential that encouragement to experiment is balanced by a rigorous approach to the collection and analysis of evidence. This means that we are able to celebrate and share information about what works but also remain objective, and only pursue initiatives which are demonstrably having a positive impact on children and young people. This evidence-based and enquiry-led approach also links to our interest in promoting the development of a broad range of competences alongside knowledge, including developing pupils' questioning and critical thinking skills.

We will continue to be outward-facing, drawing ideas and expertise that might be relevant to work with RSA Academies not only from other schools but also from other sectors, and not only within the West Midlands region but nationally and internationally. And we will utilise the research expertise within the wider RSA and with key strategic partners, including Warwick University.

*Give us Continuing Professional Development and we will participate. Give us Creative Professional Development and a Licence to Create and we will innovate and share new levels of intellectual and cultural freedom*

Lorna Owen, Vice Principal at Holyhead School and acting Director of RSA Academies Teaching School Alliance

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# Resourcing

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The core funding for RSA Academies comes from the schools in the RSA Family and from the RSA. The financial arrangements are set out in the respective Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs). The MOU between RSA and RSA Academies runs for five years from 1 April 2012, the MOUs with individual schools run for five years from the date on which the school joined the RSA Family.

A school's contribution is linked to the size of the school and therefore the school's budget. The RSA 'match fund' the schools' contributions up to a maximum of £100,000 per year. RSA Academies has also secured additional funding to support specific projects.

The work of RSA Academies is supported by a small central team currently comprising four staff (3FTE) as follows: the Chief Executive (0.8), the Programme Manager (full time), the Programme Co-ordinator (full time), and the Student Leadership Co-ordinator (school based, working 0.2 on Family wide leadership activities). This will be reviewed as the Family grows further.

RSA Academies receives significant in-kind support from the RSA, including dedicated time for members of the education team to support projects with RSA academies. RSA Academies also benefits from substantial in-kind support from RSA Fellows who are working with the schools in a variety of ways, and from the RDIs. The schools themselves also commit significant in-kind and other support over and above their financial contribution towards RSA Academies work.

Over the next three years we anticipate that RSA Academies' income will grow from an anticipated £226,000 in 2015/16 to around £300,000 in 2017/18. The exact figure will depend on the number and size of the new schools joining the RSA Family of Academies. This is core funding and excludes the additional funding for specific projects.



RSA Academies aims to give learners the broad range of skills, qualifications and experiences they need to thrive in their continuing education and the world of work.



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