



RSA Academies

Giving Pupils and Teachers the Power to Create

RSA Academies Strategic Plan 2017-2022

Our vision

RSA Academies will achieve the very best outcomes for all children, whatever their starting point. Children at our schools will participate in a wide range of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities to develop knowledge, skills, interest and networks that will raise aspirations and help them achieve their ambitions. Teachers will be creative and have the confidence to enrich children's wider learning. Our vision is that, by March 2022, RSA Academies will be a renowned academy partner, whose distinctive approach is widely understood and increasingly influential in education circles.

Our mission

We will achieve our vision by:

- 1) Creating a family of high performing schools providing an inspirational education for all pupils that 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 achievement.
- 2) Encouraging other schools and education policy makers to adopt our successful approaches by testing and evaluating new ideas, sharing our work through events and publications, and by direct work with other schools and teachers through the RSA Academies' Teaching School Alliance.

A unique approach

RSA Academies is a charity established to develop a distinctive vision of what it means to provide an exceptional education for children of all ages. Our approach is based on a partnership of equals between the RSA and the schools in the RSA Family of Academies. RSA

Academies operates as an umbrella trust, rather than a multi-academy trust, working with a network of locally based multi-academy trusts. This means that the individual schools and local multi-academy trusts within the group are able to share ideas and provide support and challenge to one another, whilst also retaining the autonomy and flexibility to take decisions that meet the needs of their own local communities.

The schools within the RSA Family of Academies focus on five key areas:

A. *Children love to learn and achieve*: all children at schools in the RSA Family of Academies will make excellent progress in their learning throughout their school career, and develop a love of learning and confidence in their ability to do new things that stays with them into adult life.

B. *Children are creative and turn their ideas into action*: our schools provide access to high quality arts, cultural and design projects. Children have opportunities to work creatively and on projects that are relevant to the real world 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, competences and knowledge they need.

C. *Connections with the world beyond the school gate*: children will develop a wide range of skills and knowledge of the world beyond the school gate to enable them to thrive in their continuing education, the world of work and society. There will be a growing network of RSA Academies' alumni that support one another, provide role models for current pupils, and link to the RSA Fellowship.

D. *Inclusive schools that meet the needs of the whole child*: RSA academies are inclusive schools. They seek out and respond to the views of pupils and the wider school community. Some pupils will at certain times have difficulties in their lives out of school that may cause a barrier to learning, including challenges to their health and well-being. Our schools strive to work with the child, their family, and other agencies as needed to ensure that every child has the support they need to achieve their full potential.

E. *Staff are inspired to be confident and creative*: teachers are encouraged and challenged to be creative, engage with relevant research, and be confident in testing out new approaches to enrich pupils' learning. They will have opportunities to engage with and contribute to the wider work of the RSA. Through the RSA Academies' Teaching School Alliance all staff, including teacher trainees, will have access to an exceptional programme of continuous professional development and learning opportunities, and a supportive environment in which to develop.

In line with our mission, our sixth priority is to ***increase our impact locally and nationally*** by encouraging other schools and policy makers to adopt our successful approaches and by growing the RSA Family of Academies.

How we work

RSA Academies supports the development of the Family of high performing and distinctive schools, and work to encourage other schools and policy makers to adopt our successful approaches, in five main ways.

RSA Academies' distinctiveness is reflected in the Commitments that schools in the RSA Family of Academies sign up to in the areas of Arts, Culture and Creativity and the World Beyond the School Gate. We **directly deliver programmes** that support this distinctiveness. These include the annual Arts day and Arts prize, a range of individual school and Family-wide projects with Royal Designers for Industry, and Performing Arts Hub projects which have given pupils at our schools the opportunity to work with and perform at prestige artists and venues in Birmingham. Connections to the world beyond the school gate include a long-running and highly successful Year 8 student leadership programme, a new Key Stage 3 careers initiative, support for social action projects, and a series of opportunities involving RSA Fellows including work-place visits, mock interviews, careers talks and mentoring. The family-wide calendar of events also includes a Sports Day and the RSA Cup (quiz) competition, which were initiated by staff and pupils at the schools in the Family.

A second strand is to **facilitate school to school support, challenge and networks**. School improvement support and challenge is supported formally by the RSA Academies externally led peer reviews and Performance Review Committee, and informally through the Principals' meetings and other cross-school networks. The RSA Academies Teaching School Alliance (TSA) also has an important role in identifying and responding to training and development needs across the Family and facilitating school to school support. RSA Academies also supports, challenges and builds networks to implement the RSA Academies Commitments on Arts, Culture and Creativity and the World Beyond the School Gate.

RSA Academies **trials new approaches** at teacher and whole school level. Teachers are encouraged to test out new approaches to pupils' learning and share their findings through the Fellowship Enquiry programme for Recently Qualified Teachers (RQTs). RSA Academies have successfully piloted the Pupil Design Awards, a school age version of the RSA's Student Design Awards programme, and the use of design thinking within initial teacher training. Over the next period we will encourage the further roll-out of these initiatives. During 2017/18 schools across the RSA Family will be piloting a new approach to children's mental health, which we intend to develop into a pack of training resources and other materials that other schools will adopt.

RSA Academies works with the RSA and the RSA Academies TSA to **promote our successful approaches to a wider audience**. RSA Academies and the schools within the RSA Family feature prominently in RSA events and publications, including the Warwick University/ RSA Academies annual debate as part of the RSA events programme, and regular blogs and articles in RSA publications. We are increasingly asked to write for and speak at external publications and

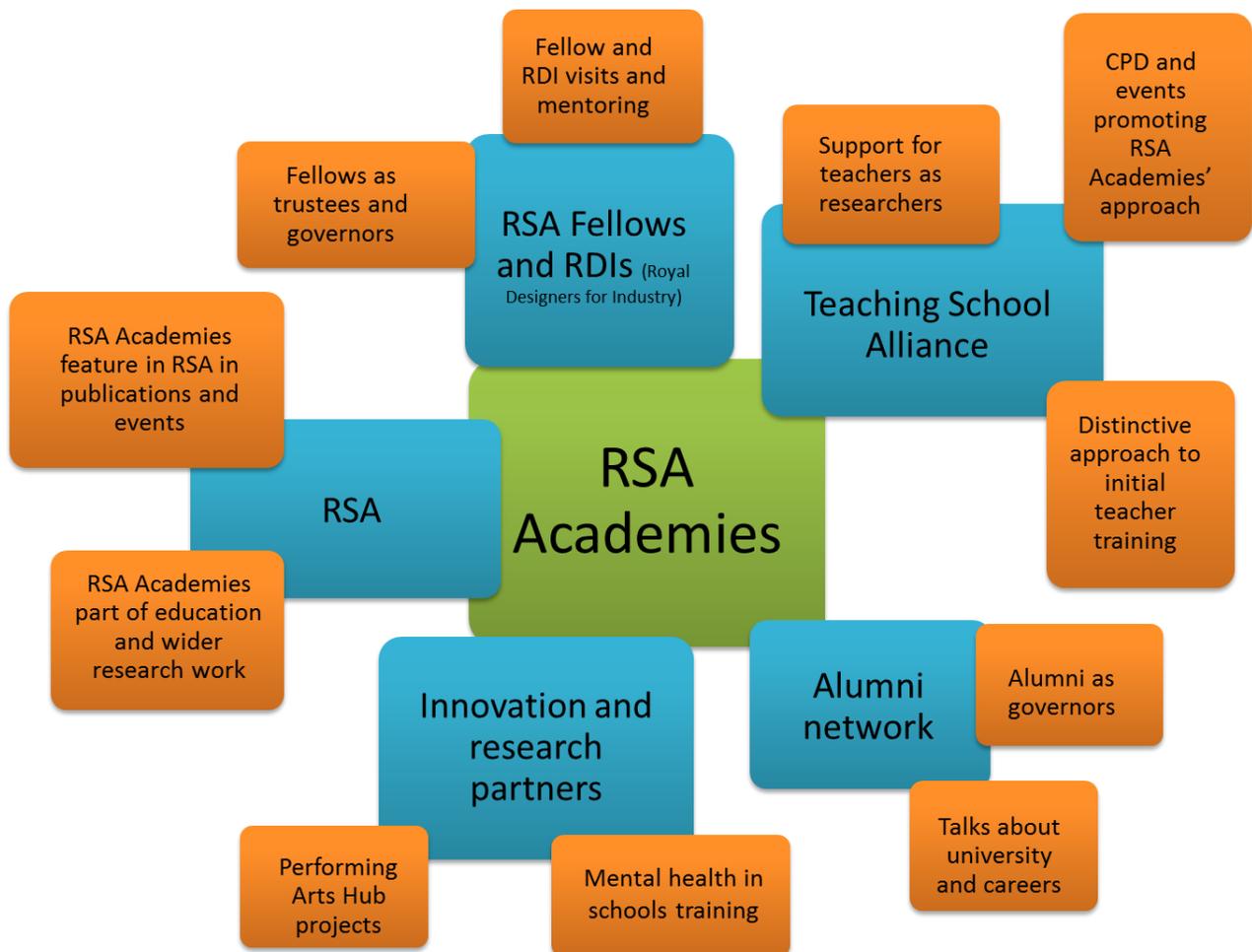
events. RSA Academies and the RSA Academies TSA work together on CPD and conferences for teachers across the West Midlands aligned with the RSA Academies objectives.

Our work is underpinned by support for the **robust governance arrangements** which reflect and enhance the close collaboration between RSA Academies, the RSA, and the schools within the RSA Family. The RSA Academies Board meets on a quarterly basis and is supported by a Performance Review Committee (focused on school standards), a Finance Committee, and a Nominations Committee. In addition, the Principals meet quarterly as an Executive, and Chairs of Governors meet on a termly basis.

This RSA Academies work is funded by the membership contributions from schools in the RSA Family, by the RSA, and through external grants for specific projects.

Partnerships

The RSA Academies team sits at the heart of a powerful network of people and organisations who, by collaborating effectively together, have the potential to improve the life chances of children attending our schools and influence education policy more widely.



Our successes to date

In five years, RSA Academies has established itself as a highly effective academy partner. We currently support seven schools working with over 4,500 pupils aged from 3 to 19 across the West Midlands. We have led the development of a shared and increasingly distinctive offer to pupils and teachers aligned to the RSA's approach, the *Power to Create*, whilst supporting high standards in academic school performance measures. We have also begun to build a reputation as a respected and innovative academy partner whose governance arrangements offer an alternative model of school collaboration and development to that promoted by the majority of high profile academy chains.

- *18 teachers recruited to the first year of our Initial Teacher Education programme – in one year we have become Birmingham City University's largest partner*
- *400+ former students recruited to the RSA Academies alumni programme*
- *All seven schools rated either 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted (July 2017)*
- *95% of staff report feel positively about working as part of the RSA Family of Academies, and 90% of teachers have worked with colleagues from another school.*
- *More than 200 RSA Fellows have attended events at RSA Academies, and over 30 are working with our schools on a regular basis*

Over the next five years, RSA Academies will make a step change in our impact. Whilst our focus on excellence at schools within the RSA Family of Academies will continue, over the next period we will also seek to shape practice in other schools, and, in partnership with the RSA, influence education policy nationally.

We will look to gradually increase the number of schools working as part of the RSA Family of Academies by growing our existing Academy Trusts in Birmingham, Coventry, Redditch and Sandwell, and by looking to establish new local MATs in and around the West Midlands. We will also look to form new partnerships with individuals and organisations interested in working with RSA Academies and the schools in our Family on new projects which align with our mission and will bring benefits to the children, families and schools that we work with.

Organisations and individuals wishing to work with RSA Academies, whether as a school interested in joining the RSA Family, an individual considering training to teach, or an employer, university, or RSA Fellow who may be able to contribute to connecting pupils to the world beyond the school gate can find out more at our website www.rsaacademies.org.uk or by emailing Colin Hopkins, Executive Director colin.hopkins@rsaacademies.org.uk.