



Department
for Education

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Letter to all Academy, Free School, UTC and Studio School Principals/Heads, CEOs and Chairs

(Please circulate to all your staff electronically or by placing on a staffroom noticeboard, whether that is physical or on your intranet.)

Update on the academy system and the new regional structure

It is now 6 months since the Regional School Commissioners (RSCs) started their work with their Headteacher Boards (HTBs) advising them and, as the National Schools Commissioner, it has been my privilege to oversee the introduction of this new system and the continued growth in numbers of academies, free schools, UTCs and studio schools.

All the feedback we are receiving clearly indicates that the RSCs are already making a significant impact and are being successful in their main objectives. As such, I wanted to write to you to give you an update on how the academy and free school programme is developing. But first, I wanted to thank you for the work you do, day in and day out, to improve the life chances of the children you teach and support; thank you!

By April 2015 there should be around 5,000 academies and free schools, educating nearly 40% of all children in state schools and employing 40% of the workforce.

The increasing number of academies and free schools meant that the creation of a new system was required in order to maintain effective oversight of our schools. Within government and the education sector there was, and still is, a growing consensus that decisions about the academy school system, including free schools, UTCs and studio schools, should be taken closer to the ground, and that education leaders should have a stronger influence on those decisions.

As such, England has been divided into 8 regions; each area now has a Regional Schools Commissioner and they are advised by a Headteacher Board. The HTB has four elected outstanding Heads and two to four appointed or co-opted members to ensure balance and breadth. Details of your RSC and HTB can be found at the bottom of this letter or [on the gov.uk website](#).

The key roles of the RSC and their HTB are overseeing all academies and free schools, supporting and intervening when things have gone wrong, and making sure there are enough sponsors to work with those schools that need support. They also approve schools that want to become academies and encourage them to join groups to ensure that staff and children have the very best opportunities to get better, or, if already good, to become outstanding.

The evidence of better outcomes and more rapid progress is steadily growing: we can see this from primary academy results over the last 3 years and, especially, from results in sponsored secondary academies that have been open for a longer period of time (see graphs at end). Additionally, in a piece of work published in 2012, Robert Hill found that academies in chains of 3+ are improving faster than other academies. So we are encouraging academies to join together into groups in a formal way, whether it be a Multi-academy Trust (MAT) or a partnership.

Although many of these academies had previously been unable to break away from the challenge of their situation, some over generations, we see that now, they are achieving nearly as well as the national average and have permanently broken the chains that were holding them down. Many of you will know the efforts and hard work that have been put in to achieve these turnarounds. We know that academies work.

We also know that not everything has gone smoothly in creating this new system; most has, however some of the ideas that have been tried have not always worked out as planned. What we are doing by creating the regional system of RSCs and HTBs is ensuring that decision-making takes place as close to the point of impact as possible and that we make full use of local knowledge, and the expertise and experience of some of our best leaders. Thus we intend to minimise the chances of ideas not working out as well as they should.

However, one of the biggest challenges we still face is getting enough sponsors to come forward so that we can provide support more rapidly as well as challenge underperformance in those schools and communities which have got into difficulties.

What is a sponsor? Initially, sponsors were individuals and organisations that had the commitment, resources and enthusiasm to want to help build better schools and provide better chances for children. Increasingly sponsors are now good or outstanding schools that want to help their communities in a wider way than just those children in their care. They need to have the vision, capacity, resilience and capability to build better schools.

We are increasingly encouraging schools to get into groups (between 3 and 9 schools) because many of our most successful chains and groups of schools have been built in this way. We also know that schools that have been in difficulties improve more rapidly when in a local, supportive group.

We are genuinely being given the opportunity to take control of the profession ourselves. I say 'ourselves' as I still consider myself to be a teacher, having worked in schools, CTCs and academies for over 40 years.

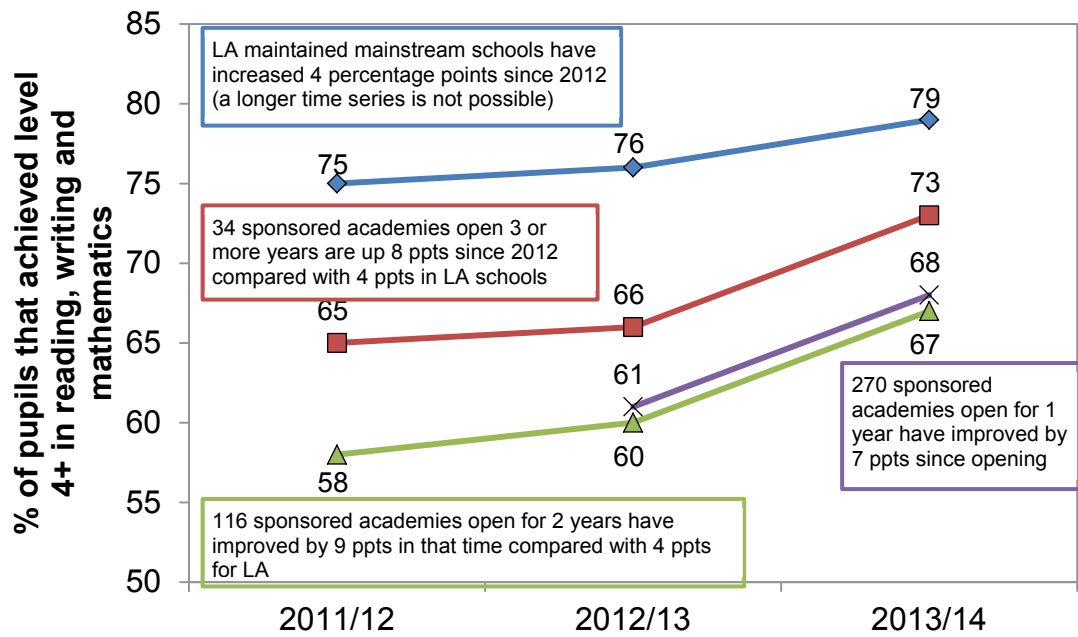
So, once again, thank you for all that you are doing and let's make sure we improve the life chances of many more children in the coming years.

Yours sincerely,

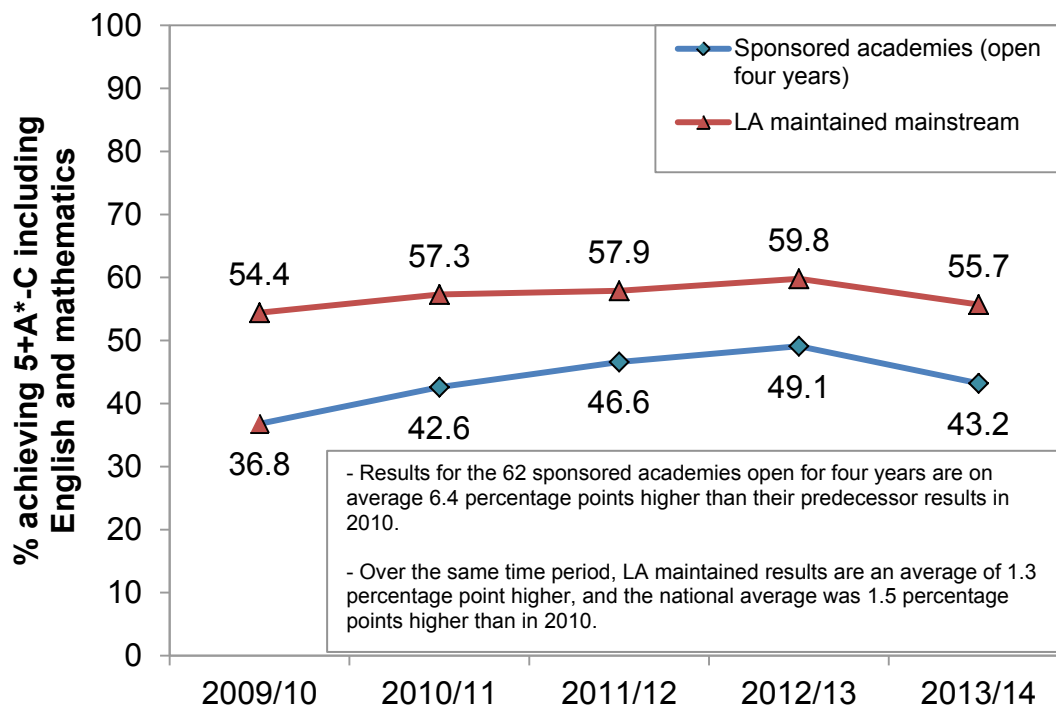
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Frank Green". The signature is written in a cursive style and is enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Frank Green
Schools Commissioner

Attainment in sponsored primary academies



Attainment in sponsored secondary academies



Regional Schools Commissioners and Headteacher Board members by Region:

East of England and North-East London

[Regional School Commissioner Tim Coulson](#) meets with the following HTB

members:

- Caroline Mary Bronwyn Haynes (Tendring Technology College)
- Stephen Munday (Comberton Village College)
- Debbie Rogan (The Wickford Church of England School and Briscoe Primary)
- Margaret Wilson (The King John School Academy Trust)
- Rachel De Souza (Inspiration Trust)
- Steve Lancashire (Reach2 Academy Trust)
- Roy Blatchford (National Education Trust)
- Mark Jeffries (Mills and Reeve LLP)

East Midlands and the Humber

[Regional School Commissioner Jennifer Bexon-Smith](#) meets with the following HTB members:

- Chris Beckett (The Deepings School)
- Hugh Howe (Beauchamp College)
- Christine Linnitt (Holywell Primary School)
- Geoff Lloyd (Tuxford Academy)
- Chris Abbott (Hunsley Trust)
- Andrew Burns (Redhill Academy)

Lancashire and West Yorkshire

[Regional School Commissioner Paul Smith](#) meets with the following HTB members:

- Jane Acklam (Moor End Academy)
- Pamela Birch (Hambleton Primary School)
- Martin Shevill (Consilium Academies Trust)
- Alan Yellup (Wakefield City Academy)
- Sir Iain Hall (Great Schools for All Children)
- Sir Rod Aldridge (Aldridge Foundation)
- Chris O'Shaughnessy (Wise Owl Trust)

North of England

[Regional School Commissioner Janet Renou](#) meets with the following HTB members:

- Zoe Carr (Town End Academy)
- Chris Clarke (Queen Elizabeth School)
- Nick Hurn (Cardinal Hume Catholic School)
- Lesley Powell (The Academy at Shotton Hall)
- Les Walton (Northern Education Trust)
- Andrew Bayston (Harrogate High School)
- Wendy Heslop (Cramlington Learning Village and Teaching School)

South-Central England and North-West London

[Regional School Commissioner Martin Post](#) meets with the following HTB members:

- Richard Edwards (Nicholas Hawksmoor Primary School)

- Sir Michael Griffiths (Northampton School for Boys)
- Claire Robins (Sir John Lawes School)
- Teresa Tunnadine (The Compton School)
- Dame Alison Peacock (The Wroxham School)
- Kate Dethridge (Churchend Primary Academy Trust)

South-East England and South London

[Regional School Commissioner Dominic Herrington](#) meets with the following HTB members:

- Rhona Julia Barnfield (Howard of Effingham School)
- Ian Bauckham (Bennett Memorial Diocesan School)
- Andrew Carter (South Farnham School)
- Denise Shepherd (Rochester Grammar School)
- Nikki King (Isuzu Truck UK Ltd)
- Angela Barry (The Woodland Academy Trust)
- Mark Ducker (STEP Academy Trust)

South-West England

[Regional School Commissioner Sir David Carter](#) meets with the following HTB members:

- Dave Baker (Bradley Stoke Community School and Abbeywood Community School)
- Lorraine Heath (Uffculme School)
- Lisa Mannall (Trenance Learning Academy)
- Roger Pope (Kingsbridge Community College)
- Nick Capstick (The White Horse Federation)
- Brian Hooper (Ambitions Academies Trust)

West Midlands

[Regional School Commissioner Pank Patel](#) meets with the following HTB members:

- Mike Donoghue (John Taylor High School)
- Billy Downie (The Streetly Academy)
- David Seddon (Baxter College)
- Sally Yates (Deanery Church of England Primary School)
- Sir Mark Grundy (Shireland Academy)
- Linda Davis (Wistaston Academy)
- Peter Rubery (Fallibroome Academy)