

Acquiring teaching school status: what does it mean?

Ref: 9152

UPDATED on 12 Feb 2015

What does it mean to acquire teaching school status? We outline information from the National College about becoming a teaching school. We also relay some of the benefits and challenges associated with teaching school status, as described by three teaching school directors.

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What does teaching school status mean?

Who can apply to be a teaching school?

The National College for Teaching and Leadership (National College) has information about teaching school status, available on GOV.UK. It says that teaching school status is open to all types and phases of schools in England.

To apply for this status, a school must have been rated 'outstanding' by Ofsted, give evidence of successful partnerships and excellent leadership, and have a proven track-record of school improvement. The headteacher must have at least three years of experience, and the leadership team must have the capacity to lead the six core areas of the teaching school role, which we explain below.

[Teaching schools: a guide for potential applicants, GOV.UK – National College](#)

<https://www.gov.uk/teaching-schools-a-guide-for-potential-applicants>

What do teaching schools do?

The government's policy on improving the quality of teaching and leadership says that teaching schools may lead 'teaching school alliances'. Each alliance consists of the leading teaching school, the schools it supports, and their partners.

[Improving the quality of teaching and leadership, GOV.UK – DfE](#)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/improving-the-quality-of-teaching-and-leadership/supporting-pages/teaching-schools>

According to the National College's guide for potential applicants, linked to above, teaching schools have six core areas of responsibility:

1. Developing opportunities to provide school-led initial teacher training
2. Offering a range of professional development opportunities for staff and extending the school's learning culture to other schools they work with
3. Leading the co-ordination of school-to-school support (usually through working with a school in challenging circumstances to bring about improvement)
4. Developing successful succession planning strategies to identify and develop people to fill leadership positions in the future
5. Recruiting and managing the placements of specialist leaders of education (outstanding middle and senior leaders who support colleagues in other schools)
6. Undertaking research and development

How are teaching schools funded?

The guide for potential applicants, linked to above, says that teaching school alliances receive an annual grant, known as the core funding, of £60,000 in the first year, £50,000 in the second year and £40,000 in each of the third and fourth years.

It adds:

Annual core grant funding will, in general, decrease each year, which reflects the expectation that alliances, as they mature, become sustainable.

Considerations in becoming a teaching school

We spoke to the directors of three teaching school alliances, and asked what they believe are the benefits and challenges of becoming a teaching school. We outline their responses below.

Supporting sector-wide school improvement

David Whitfield is the director of the Southfields Teaching School Alliance in Wandsworth, and the representative for London on the Teaching Schools Council.

He said that teaching school status gives settings with a track record of success an opportunity to help other schools develop.

However, he believes teaching schools should not be solely responsible for driving school improvement in their alliances; teaching school status is about finding ways to help all of the schools and partners in an alliance work with one another.

Being part of a knowledge-sharing network

David said the Teaching Schools Council supports a series of national, regional and sub-regional networks for teaching schools.

For example, as the Council's representative for London, David arranges regional and sub-regional information and knowledge sharing sessions. These meetings provide practitioners with an opportunity to come together, share and reflect upon their experiences, and discuss common challenges.

Further information about the networks coordinated by the Council is available on its website:

[National and regional work-strands, Teaching Schools Council](http://tscouncil.org.uk/teaching-schools-council-network/)

<http://tscouncil.org.uk/teaching-schools-council-network/>

Becoming 'outward-facing'

David believes that teaching school status should lead to a shift in a school's thinking. He said:

All schools want the best for their pupils. However, teaching school status says to the world 'we want to make a difference for all pupils, not just our own'.

Teaching schools will therefore need to develop 'outward-facing infrastructure' by extending their existing provision, and finding new ways to work with other schools and strategic partners.

David said that how a teaching school does this will depend on its individual circumstances.

In another article from The Key, we look at whether teaching schools should restructure their senior leadership teams. You may find information in this article useful if you are considering how to put in place a staffing structure to support your alliance.

[Should a new teaching school restructure its senior leadership team?](https://schoolleaders.thekeysupport.com/staff/managing-school-staff/dealing-with-transitions/teaching-school-status-should-we-restructure-our-senior-leadership-team)

<https://schoolleaders.thekeysupport.com/staff/managing-school-staff/dealing-with-transitions/teaching-school-status-should-we-restructure-our-senior-leadership-team>

Information about the Southfields Teaching School Alliance is available here:

[Home, Southfields Teaching School Alliance](http://southfieldsalliance.co.uk/)

<http://southfieldsalliance.co.uk/>

Providing fresh challenge

Paul Goodman is the director of the Candleby Lane Teaching School Alliance in Nottinghamshire.

Paul said that teaching school status brings with it significant responsibilities and new challenges for schools ready to enter "the next phase in their growth and development".

He agreed with David that establishing outward-facing infrastructure is a challenge, but important for supporting an alliance.

In addition, Paul emphasised that, as a teaching school becomes more established and its alliance increases in size, it may 'break away' from its 'host' school. For instance, while Paul is based in Candleby Lane School, much of his time is spent in other schools throughout the alliance, or working on projects that may not directly involve Candleby Lane School itself.

This brings with it opportunities and challenges; it is important new teaching schools are prepared for these changes in day-to-day working practice.

Learning from a variety of settings

Paul said that a variety of primary, secondary and special schools around the country have teaching school status.

Becoming a teaching school therefore encourages you to speak with, and learn from, practitioners from a wide variety of settings. This provides an excellent opportunity for professional and leadership development, and for 'thinking outside the box'.

You can read more about the Candleby Lane Teaching School Alliance on its website, here:

[Home, Candleby Lane Teaching School Alliance](http://www.cltsa.org.uk/)

<http://www.cltsa.org.uk/>

Developing new skills

We visited Weydon School in Surrey, which is part of the i2i Partnership. We spoke to Mark Sharman, the director of the i2i Partnership, about establishing and running a School Direct Training Programme.

You can download a case study about Weydon School's training programme as a KeyDoc from the 'Downloads' section on the right-hand side of this page. It includes information about how the school developed new skills in marketing and recruitment in order to implement the programmes effectively.

Further information about the i2i Partnership is available at the following link:

[Home, i2i Partnership](http://www.i2ipartnership.co.uk/)

<http://www.i2ipartnership.co.uk/>

[Home, Weydon School](http://www.veydonschool.surrey.sch.uk/)

<http://www.veydonschool.surrey.sch.uk/>

Another article from The Key looks at the potential benefits of joining a teaching school alliance:

[Teaching school alliances: benefits to members](https://schoolleaders.thekeysupport.com/school-evaluation-and-improvement/networks-federations-clusters/teaching-school-alliances-benefits-to-members/key_view)

https://schoolleaders.thekeysupport.com/school-evaluation-and-improvement/networks-federations-clusters/teaching-school-alliances-benefits-to-members/key_view

Impact of teaching schools

The National College is carrying out a two-year study on the evaluation of teaching schools, which will end later in 2015. It looks at 18 teaching school alliances across the country.

The interim report, published in March 2014, says that across the 18 teaching school alliances:

... there is good progress in the delivery of initial teacher education, continuing professional development and leadership development, and school-to-school support.

It adds:

All the teaching school alliances in this evaluation have progressed since their designation and are working to develop and/or deepen partnerships within and beyond their alliances. Such development is driven by a clear sense of direction, shared values, and recognition that all partners have talents, experience and skills to share, regardless of their particular Ofsted grading.

For some teaching alliances, it says, the relationship with the local authority and the balance between collaboration and competition with neighbouring teaching school alliances have been major challenges.

[The teaching schools evaluation, GOV.UK – National College, see pages 5 and 6-7](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/287876/DFE-RB332.pdf)

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/287876/DFE-RB332.pdf

Sources and further reading

The government white paper, The Importance of Teaching, sets out the vision behind teaching schools:

[The Importance of Teaching, GOV.UK – DfE, see page 23 \(Adobe pdf file\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/175429/CM-7980.pdf)

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/175429/CM-7980.pdf

You can find previous papers from the National College about the impact of teaching school alliances on the two webpages linked to below.

[How teaching schools are already starting to make a difference, GOV.UK – National College \(Adobe pdf file\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/330522/how-teaching-schools-are-making-a-difference-part-1.pdf)

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/330522/how-teaching-schools-are-making-a-difference-part-1.pdf

[How teaching schools are making a difference: part two, GOV.UK – National College \(Adobe pdf file\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/330579/how-teaching-schools-are-making-a-difference-part-2.pdf)

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/330579/how-teaching-schools-are-making-a-difference-part-2.pdf

[What impact will the new teaching schools have on education?, The Guardian, 16 May 2013](http://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/teacher-blog/2013/may/16/impact-teaching-schools)

<http://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/teacher-blog/2013/may/16/impact-teaching-schools>

This article was updated in response to a question from a deputy headteacher at a large secondary school in London.