

# E-ACT

**E-ACT Quality  
Standards and  
Academy  
Improvement  
Strategy**

# Preface

Both the **Quality Standards** document and the **Academy Improvement Strategy** form an explicit demonstration of E-ACT's commitment to establish solid professional standards across its Academies, within a framework of high expectations and accountability. Put simply, E-ACT strives to establish stronger Academies, stronger governance and stronger E-ACT systems and structures, with built-in challenge, support and lines of accountability.

Both documents reflect the best practice and helpful guidance of the National Strategy and the Ofsted Evaluation Schedule. They should be read and used in the context of:

- the broad E-ACT vision of providing 'Excellence in Education for All' in each of its Academies
- E-ACT's key objectives, which are:
  - ◆ High attainment and achievement
  - ◆ Improved social mobility and inclusion
  - ◆ Strong student employability
- the key priorities and objectives contained within the E-ACT Corporate Plan.

Both documents symbolise the E-ACT vision of establishing autonomous, self-improving Academies, where Principals and teachers inspire students, drive school improvement and achieve the best absolute performance and the highest levels of equity. At the heart of the E-ACT approach is the principle of the individual Academies working collaboratively to improve the E-ACT system.

It is an E-ACT aspiration to have:

- a number of our Academies achieving the National Teaching School designation in order to make a major contribution to improving the standards in the performance of all students across the E-ACT system;
- the Principal of each E-ACT Academy being either a National or Local Leader of Education (NLE/LLE) in order to use the experience and skills acquired during their successful years as an Academy leader to enhance the educational experience of students across E-ACT Academies and in other local schools;
- every E-ACT Academy become a 'Hub' or 'Facilitation School', thus maximising the role it is able to play within its wider community and spreading its good practice.

The Quality Standards document contains details of the standards expected across eleven areas of Academy activity and performance, including Teaching and Learning, Governance, Student

Behaviour and Attendance. Each section includes details of the relevant minimum acceptable standards and the criteria for intervention, if these are not reached.

The Academy Improvement Strategy extends this to describe E-ACT's engagement with its Academies, in order to ensure a high minimum standard across all aspects of Academy life, and the details of its strategies for challenge and support.

These are key documents which will become embedded in Academy life and underpin the development and continuing improvement of both our Academies and the entire E-ACT organisation. We fully anticipate that these documents will be a standing item in the appointments process of Governors and, within the Academies, of Principals, senior, curriculum and phase leaders.

# **E-ACT Quality Standards**

The E-ACT Quality Standards consist of:

- 1. Teaching and Learning**
- 2. Curriculum**
- 3. Governance**
- 4. Finance**
- 5. Safeguarding**
- 6. Management of Employees and Volunteers**
- 7. Performance Management**
- 8. Professional Development**
- 9. Student Attendance**
- 10. Student Behaviour**
- 11. ICT**

**Detailed examples of Quality Standards include:**

## **Quality Standards: Governance**

### **Rationale**

Strong governing bodies are a crucial component of effective school leadership. Ofsted has found that where governance is good, standards of attainment are likely to be higher, the behaviour of students, the quality of teaching, and the leadership and management of schools are also more likely to be good.

It is essential that a governing body knows if all the students in the Academy are making progress as expected or better, and that the Academy is appropriately focused on transformational improvement. The governing body will play a central role in challenging and supporting the Academy, particularly its Leadership Team.

### **Quality Standards**

- Governors ensure that all statutory requirements and responsibilities are met and that rigorous procedures are in place to ensure the health, safety and well-being of staff, students and visitors
- Governors hold a shared vision for the Academy which is clear, understood and well communicated to staff, parents/carers and students and also reflects the fundamental values and objectives of E-ACT
- The governing body sets the strategic direction of the Academy and has a central and significant role in its leadership
- The Chair plays a significant role within the Governing Body and is a critical factor in the overall effectiveness of the Governing Body. The Chair gives a lead to other members, ensuring that meetings are run effectively.
- Governors are confident in providing high levels of professional challenge to hold the Principal to account
- The governing body understands the Academy's performance data and has an accurate overview of how well all students are achieving compared with those in other schools, as well as how different groups of students within the Academy are performing
- Governors have a clear understanding of the strengths and strategic priorities for the Academy and ensure an appropriate plan is in place and implemented effectively
- The governing body is successfully focused on raising standards and promoting the personal development and well-being of all learners. Governors ensure that Academy targets are both achievable and sufficiently challenging to lead to sustainable improvement

- Governors have a good understanding of the barriers to learning, including attendance and behaviour issues, and what the Academy is doing to overcome them
- Governors engage effectively with parents/carers, students and staff and are well informed about their views and use this to inform strategic priorities for development planning
- The governing body has a good understanding of the quality of provision within the Academy and how its performance compares locally and nationally
- Governors are fully and systematically involved in the evaluation process, keeping the work of the Academy under review and acting upon their findings
- The governing body has adopted a robust approach to the self-review of its own skills and performance, which includes a plan for improvement

## **Quality Standards: Safeguarding**

### **Rationale**

Everyone working in or for our E-ACT academies shares an objective to help keep children and young people safe by contributing to

- providing a safe environment for children and young people to learn and develop in our Academy settings, and to flourish
- identifying children and young people who are suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, and
- taking appropriate action with the aim of making sure they are kept safe both at home and in our Academy setting

### **Quality Standards**

It is essential that each of our academies

- has clear policies, strategies and procedures to ensure the safeguarding and welfare of students, including those relating to behaviour, bullying, health and safety, harassment and discrimination, and meets all required duties
- has established clear management responsibilities in relation to child protection including relevant designated staff
- monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of its policies and practices
- ensures that adults working with students are appropriately recruited and vetted

- maintains an up-to-date Single Central Register of all staff, including those recruited on a day to day or temporary basis
- encourages and enables students to report any concerns or complaints including concerns about poor or abusive practices
- takes reasonable steps to ensure that students are safe on the school site, for example by monitoring visitors or volunteers or those using the premises during school time
- identifies concerns about possible abuse and/or neglect and/or students who may have gone missing, and refers such concerns promptly to the relevant agencies
- records information relevant to safeguarding concerns clearly and accurately and shares it appropriately, both internally and with other agencies
- helps students to keep themselves safe, including encouraging students to adopt safe and responsible practices and deal sensibly with risk, for example:
  - when handling hazardous equipment and materials
  - looking after themselves during outdoor activities
  - when attending alternative educational or work-related provision
  - using the internet
  - if they come into contact with groups that encourage the use of violence

## Criteria for intervention

Each Quality Standard is completed by a section headed **Criteria for intervention**. This consists of examples of where the Quality Standards may fail to be met which would then trigger intervention by E-ACT. Intervention would be proportionate and appropriate and would consist of a series of interventions both from within the Academy and from beyond the Academy, either by E-ACT personnel or externally commissioned by E-ACT.

Examples of **Criteria for intervention** include:

### ◆ Quality Standard: Teaching and Learning

- Where external and/or internal monitoring shows that 5% or more of lessons observed are judged to be Inadequate

#### ◆Quality Standard: Finance

- Any internal audit visit, or YPLA Financial Monitoring Visit indicates significant weaknesses in financial control or financial management

#### ◆Quality Standards: Employees and Volunteers

- When recruitment strategies do not meet safeguarding standards
- Where Performance Management systems are not in place or are inadequate

# The E-ACT Academy Improvement Strategy

## 1. Core Concepts

### 1.1 Strands of engagement:

The key drivers for the E-ACT Academy Improvement strategy should:

- be in inverse proportion to success
- multifaceted, with a bespoke approach and solutions
- ensure a high minimum standard across all aspects of E-ACT Academies
- provide a sharp, intelligent accountability that focuses on underperformance and celebrates success
- provide value for money

### 1.2 Knowing and understanding our Academies:

- Education Adviser whole-day Core Monitoring Visits in order to gather information and to challenge and support the Academy Leadership

- Other Education Adviser contacts, including half-termly updates of the E-ACT Academy Scorecard
- Attendance at Governing Body meetings (1 per term) to monitor the quality of governance and the effectiveness of lines of accountability
- Facilitating / brokering Governors' training in order to ensure that Governors are enabled to shape the direction of the Academy and effectively fulfill their role of challenging and supporting and holding leaders to account
- Access to the Academy's performance data, including Minutes of Governing Body meetings, key Governors' papers (eg Principal's Report), key Academy documentation (eg Calendar, Monitoring Schedules), Academy Improvement Plan (AIP), SEF
- Holding E-ACT National Education Conferences to ensure the spread of outstanding practice across all E-ACT Academies
- Feedback from and input to the E-ACT Academies Champions Groups which meet regularly and make a significant contribution to strategic planning in the key E-ACT priority areas:
  - ◆ raising standards of attainment, including within-school variation;
  - ◆ improving attendance
  - ◆ behaviour management
  - ◆ safeguarding
  - ◆ international links
  - ◆ social and community cohesion
- Analysis of SIP/NCA Reports in order to compare with E-ACT judgements
- Using information from Ofsted/HMI Reports to inform judgements

### **1.3 Judging progress:**

***In general***, providing sharper, more intelligent accountability that both enables appropriate celebration of success and focuses on areas of underperformance.

***Specifically*** - Examples include:

- Analysis of Scorecards against Quality Standards in order to identify areas of intervention and required resources
- Analysis of performance data to identify areas of underperformance and issues of equity
- Monitoring visits to Academies (including Governors meetings) with a focus on the core E-ACT agenda and set in the context of Narrowing the Gap initiatives.
- Analysis of feedback from SIP/NCA Reports to reinforce E-ACT judgements

## **2. The E-ACT Academy Improvement offer**

### **2.1 Initiatives**

Examples include:

- A focus on issues of underperformance and social justice to ensure that the pupil premium is used effectively and every effort is made to tackle disadvantage
- Benchmarking E-ACT practices against best practice elsewhere to drive improvement and raise aspirations
- Raising standards of the Quality of Teaching and Learning (Consultant input to Coaching, staff performance, Literacy, Numeracy)
- Targeted, selective, differentiated deployment of Within-School Variation (WSV) strategies
- Supporting and challenging Academies in their preparation for Ofsted / HMI visits

### **2.2 Intervention**

The rationale for Intervention: to build capacity and capability which secures the improvement of student performance and teacher effectiveness at a pace.

- Triggered by assessment against Quality Standards
- Focused, proportionate and bespoke
- Monitored and evaluated by E-ACT Education Advisers

### **2.3 Assessing the impact of the E-ACT Academy Improvement Strategy:**

Examples of the E-ACT Quality Assurance (QA) framework will include:

- Consultants undertaking focused QA work to test impact and embed good practice
- Scrutiny of Reports by Director of Education
- Analysis of results – both initial and ratified – in order to measure progress

### **3. The E-ACT 'house style'?**

We will know that we have added value when:

- Our challenging, supportive and respectful relationship with E-ACT Academies gives us a deep understanding of both the issues which affect our Academies and the underlying dynamics which drive them.
- Our use of data and local intelligence enables us to prioritise and focus on what makes the most difference
- A combination of our commissioning role, our broad experience and knowledge and our established partnerships provides us with the flexibility to tailor support and intervention packages, so that priorities are clear and impact is maximised.
- Our developed communication channels will enable us to provide clear, consistent and coherent messages both across and within our E-ACT Academies

## How will the E-ACT Academy Improvement Strategy be distinct?

**We expect our engagement to be a centrally-driven single conversation which provides answers to these questions:**

How well is E-ACT and its individual Academies performing? What are the pockets of excellence? Where are the weaknesses and areas to be developed?

- Hard data on progress against targets and objectives
- Monitoring and evaluation of SEF
- E-ACT Academy Scorecard
- Judgements against E-ACT Quality Standards
- SIP and Ofsted Reports and judgements

What are the issues? What are their underlying causes?

- Understanding the community context – local politics, socio-economic issues
- Working with local partners – teachers, parents, Local Authority, FE, HE
- Education Adviser / DG Rep attendance at Governing Body meetings
- Access to Academy contextual and performance data
- Analysis of Within School Variation (WSV)

What is already being done to tackle areas of concern? Is it working?

- Analysis of Professional Development Plan and opportunities for staff
- Analysis of Academy organisation, including curriculum, Rewards and Sanctions
- RAG-rated progress of Success Criteria and Objectives in AIP
- Feedback from Academy Champions Groups
- Education team judgements on capacity and capability to improve

Does anything else need to be done?

- Judgements made against Quality Standards Criteria for Intervention
- Focused Academy-based and led initiatives
- Commissioned and external intervention initiatives

Does intervention seem to be working? What feedback are we getting? What are our Quality Assurance judgements?

- Outcomes analysis
- E-ACT Quality Assurance visits and initiatives
- Scrutiny of all monitoring reports and performance data by Director of Education
- Consultants undertaking focused QA work to test impact, embedding