

'Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.'

NELSON MANDELA

The educational challenge

Too many of our children still face a tough and sometimes hopeless start to their lives.

Consider the following current depressing facts:¹

- Of the 6% of secondary schools which are still rated as failing, the majority are in the 5% most deprived areas of the country.
- Only 17% of children from disadvantaged backgrounds enter higher education compared to 50% from the upper and middle income brackets.
- The richest 10% have a 65% better chance of getting five A*-C grades at GCSE than the poorest 10%.
- Almost a fifth of children in the UK live in the bottom 10% of deprived areas.
- There are 28% more teenage pregnancies in the 10% most deprived areas compared with the national average.
- Almost 18% of children live in households where there is no wage earner.

Despite educational spending on a par with the rest of Europe, the system is too often failing those for whom education should be one of the few escape routes into a life that is personally and professionally rewarding.

If left unresolved, this unhappy start in life feeds through to a cycle of multi-deprivation, continuing to deepen the economic divisions between those who prosper and those who fall behind. As long ago as 1986, the 'Faith in the City' Report identified the emergence of an underclass in the poorest areas measured by multi-deprivation indicators, including high levels of crime, unemployment, teenage pregnancies, low incomes and poor housing.

“Businesses expect to constantly seek and meet new challenges. Accordingly they equip themselves with the expertise needed to meet those challenges. Philanthropy is no different; the challenges are just as tough. However the stakes can be even higher in human terms. That is why we have joined forces with ULT which, with both its business acumen and educational expertise, is getting measurable results. This combination of doing what it does well and doing it effectively and efficiently fits perfectly with the values with which we would wish to associate ourselves.”

SARAH SHILLITO, HEAD OF THE VODAFONE UK FOUNDATION

Finding the right answer

The public sector on its own has been unable to deal with this, leading to an urgent need to engage with the private sector to assist with what has been an intractable problem for decades.

This realisation was the guiding principle behind the creation of the Academy Programme. In 2001 the Government asked the private sector to join it in a new partnership in establishing academies (which are independent from local education authorities). Academies were to be at the cutting edge of progress in the state-funded educational market and become beacons for both the independent and state sectors.

The United Church Schools Trust (UCST) was keen to get involved. UCST was founded in 1883 to pursue a vision with a contemporary social purpose: to enable girls to receive a sufficiently academic education to enter

universities and professions and to play a fuller role in the nation's life. As the Millennium approached we asked ourselves, "What would our founders have done had they been alive today?"

We asked how we could bring our skills and experience to bear in transforming the educational landscape. The advent of the Academy Programme was the perfect vehicle for our aspirations. The decision to bring the best of the private sector into public sector education is an unprecedented example of public/private engagement.

Our first involvement came with discussions about the formation of Lambeth Academy, which made it plain just how valuable a contribution we could make. In 2002 the United Learning Trust (ULT) was born as a subsidiary charity of UCST to oversee our Academy activity.

A clear vision and agenda for change

ULT is determined to be in the forefront of breaking this cycle of decline by promoting and delivering excellent education. We are now well advanced in our programme of setting up city academies in the country's most deprived areas by replacing failing schools. ULT is the largest and leading sponsor in the Academy Programme.

Academies are independent, non-fee paying state schools providing an educational agenda that is rigorous, inclusive and well in tune with the needs of the local communities. Our Academies are at the cutting edge, for the buildings themselves and the provision of an information and communications technology network, from which all the Academies benefit.

At ULT we are both very passionate and very focused about our purpose. We want to help young people grow into adults who are interested in a wide range of activities, possess a love of learning, have a spiritual sense to guide their relationships and a deep understanding of the human ability to aspire to great heights. This is based on our core ethos of respect, service and compassion, discipline and hard work, which comes from our foundation within the Church.

In short, we want to bring out 'the best in everyone'.

¹ Sources: 2006, National Statistics/Neighbourhood Renewal Unit.



The head of a business and the heart of a charity

ULT is a charity without a cash generating financial foundation and we can only achieve our ambitious goals with the help of benefactors. For each £1.5 million received, the Government contributes the remaining capital needed to establish an academy, along with the annual running costs. We have already raised £14.5 million of the £26 million required to open 16 Academies. Benefaction has ranged from £500 to £2.5 million.

Benefactors can help change the face of education in the UK in a number of ways:

- Joining fellow enterprising people guiding and partnering their skills with Academies as local governors, assistants in classrooms, mentors to individuals and groups of students.
- Making a financial contribution to one of the existing Academies which needs further funding to reach the required target.
- Funding a completely new Academy with a donation of £1.5 million to secure the necessary capital funding for an exceptional new building, together with future operational funding from the state.

Each gift leverages 10 to 20 times its value from the Government in the establishment and support of an Academy.

Benefactors can then play as active a role as they wish.

Making a difference: some of our benefactors

- The Vodafone UK Foundation, registered charity of Vodafone, locally employing 800 people, is sole benefactor for North Oxfordshire Academy, Banbury.
- Honda Motor Europe is the major supporter of the Academy in Swindon, where it employs 4,000 people.
- The Entertainment Software Charity is the sole benefactor of Paddington Academy.
- The Khayami Foundation has supported both Sheffield Academies.
- A range of charities and individuals have given £2 million for Lambeth Academy.
- Locally-based individuals, business and charities have endowed Northampton Academy.
- An entrepreneur has offered to support an Academy in East Lancashire.



Raising expectations in Manchester

ULT's first Academy opened in 2003 in Moss Side, Manchester. It replaced Ducie High School, one of the five worst performing schools in the country. The situation was horrific, compounded by 60 different first languages being spoken:

- Attendance for Year 11 was 50% and for the school overall 80%.
- Behaviour was appalling with high exclusion rates and low expectations.
- Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) in 2003 described 'Teaching and Learning' as 'profoundly unsatisfactory'.

We could not let the opportunity to help pass by. With investment, strong new leadership and a change of ethos, we are now making a real difference:

- Attendance has risen significantly, Year 11 now has an attendance of 90% and the school is 91.5% (the national average is 92%).
- The Academy last year tripled the five A*-C exam results of the previous year. Five A*-C including English and Maths rose from a low point of 4% to 12%.
- Behaviour – 'Students' behaviour and attitudes to learning are good': HMI 2005.
- Expectations – 'Student said it was worth coming because people make you feel good about yourself': HMI 2005.
- Teaching and Learning – 'Satisfactory/good': HMI 2005.

Manchester Academy has become a shining example of what it is possible to achieve but there is still a long way to go to overcome the challenges we face.

Why should you contribute?

Education should be a high priority for sound social and economic reasons. Not only does social justice demand that all children be given the chance to fulfil their potential, but a well-educated population is the basis of a healthy and meritocratic society. The economy also benefits substantially. The life chances of those with a good education are better in terms of employment, health and income. Moreover, in today's global economy, a skilled workforce is essential to compete.

When education lets one child down, it lets everyone down.

To deliver our vision and go on creating more successful Academies for students and their communities, we welcome your assistance. There are a number of ways to become involved:

1. **Keep in Touch.** Join the mailing list for Blue Skies, a regular newsletter highlighting our progress and achievements.
2. **Friend in the Field.** Become a 'Friend in the Field' through personal involvement and help us extend our reach to a wider circle of like-minded people. There are a number of different ways to become involved, for example, as local governors, assistants in classrooms, mentors to individuals and groups of students.
3. **Benefactor.** Make a contribution to one of the existing Academies which needs further funding to reach the required target or fund a completely new Academy.

ULT is an organisation with open arms, looking to engage with all those interested in learning more about ULT Academies and the Academy Programme. We would be more than willing to discuss any level of involvement and arrange a visit to an Academy to experience first hand the transformation taking place – Bringing out the best in everyone.

Thank you for your time and consideration and should you wish to be in contact please don't hesitate to call:

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Frequently asked questions

What is an academy?

City Academy status has only been offered to the worst performing schools in the country. An academy is a fully comprehensive school with a specialism: the Government pays for the capital project of building a new school or undertaking major refurbishment. They are set up in areas of major deprivation where there is a failing school already. They are the successors to the City Technology Colleges introduced in 1987.

How did ULT become involved in setting up academies?

They are being set up as part of the Government's City Academy initiative to combine the best of public and private sector expertise. ULT has been chosen to spearhead this programme because of its impressive and trusted track record in education.

UCST operates ten thriving fee-paying Schools today and thus offers matchless opportunities for cross-fertilisation. Both the independent fee-paying Schools and Academies stimulate each other's performance through joint training, curriculum development and their approach to a relentless agenda of improvement.

How many academies are up and running?

There are currently 45 academies open, of which ULT sponsors nine. With 20% of the total academies, ULT is the largest and leading sponsor. Our existing Academies are located in: Lambeth, Walthamstow, Paddington, Northampton, Manchester, Salford, Barnsley and two in Sheffield. Three more are due to follow in 2007 (Stockport, Swindon, Banbury) and to date ULT has been invited by the Government to found 16.

Who is involved in running ULT?

Our Board and central office personnel are drawn from all areas of the private and state education sectors and injected with strong leaders and passion from the commercial world. Sir Ewan Harper has been the Chief Executive of UCST since 1990 and ULT since its inception in 2002. Sir Ewan comes from a respected and successful career in the business sector, formerly being Chairman of a manufacturing business which won a Queen's Award for export.

How can a benefactor help?

Benefactors provide up to 10% of the initial capital costs and can be closely involved in running the Academies or not as they wish. Benefactors come from a wide range of backgrounds, including individual philanthropists, businesses, national charities and educational foundations. Their role is to challenge traditional thinking and bring fresh ideas and a vision to the schools they are involved in, with the express purpose of raising educational standards.

How transparent are the financial arrangements?

We believe that transparency of finance is essential. Because academies are not given any financial advantage over other state-funded schools, strict financial management is critical. The UCST central office handles the administration of both its Schools and Academies, which keeps these costs below 2% of overall turnover.