

Corporate plan

2008–2009 to 2010–2011



About the SSAT

Who we are

We are the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT), an independent, not-for-profit membership organisation dedicated to raising levels of achievement in secondary education. We have a membership of over 4900 schools and organisations. We are a registered charity.

What we do

We work with head teachers, teachers and students to encourage them to develop and share new and effective teaching and learning practice, and to improve schools to raise standards and levels of achievement. In practice, head teachers and teachers design, lead and deliver our work, and head teachers continue to develop what we do.

We encourage and promote networking and partnership between schools and the community. This helps to raise standards and levels of achievement, allowing every student to achieve their full potential.

Through our networks, the following areas of work are at the heart of everything we do.

- Achievement
- Community
- Continuing professional development
- Innovation
- Leadership
- New technologies
- Specialism
- Education for 14- to-19-year-olds

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Chairman's foreword



I am proud that this plan clearly focuses on our approach to working with head teachers, schools, businesses, the community, universities, local authorities and the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). We gain our strength from these relationships and, by working closely with different types of people with many skills and viewpoints, we can continue to be a leading organisation in education.

A lot of our work is led by teachers and educational professionals and this is important to our success. The way we work helps us understand local issues because we have a close relationship with schools. I believe that working with schools is important so that we can give practical support to schools and inspire and challenge teachers to raise standards.

The next three years are an exciting time to develop the schooling system, set up with the support of the SSAT over the last 20 years. We started a review of our governance arrangements in 2006, and the much smaller board of trustees (see page 21) supported by a stakeholder advisory council (see the glossary), is in place to introduce this plan. We look forward to supporting specialist schools, academies and students during the next three years.

Sir James Hill Bt. OBE DL
Chairman

Chief Executive's introduction



I am delighted to introduce this plan which looks at our commitments for the next three years. We are lucky to have a wide membership of schools and other partners, all of which help us to create original educational programmes. We have 3580 members in England and 4916 in total worldwide (18 March 2008).

Our plan supports our aim for the future, and helps us put in place a world-class network of high-performing secondary schools. We can only do this by working with others, and we are pleased to work with the 'Family of schools' (primary schools), special schools, higher education, further education, and businesses to achieve this. We also have a growing and wide-ranging set of working relationships with the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), other government departments, non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs – see the glossary), and other educational organisations to support us to achieve our aim and objectives.

We use our guiding principle 'by schools, for schools' in everything we do. We aim to make sure that head teachers lead our work and that schools are involved in delivering our programmes to improve student achievement and raise educational standards.

We will support schools to achieve the aims of the Government's 'Children's Plan'. We will build on our work with schools to introduce programmes of work to support members and partners. We aim to support the priorities in the 'Children's Plan' in ways that support schools to make sure every student achieves.



Elizabeth Reid
Chief Executive

Our aim, principles, values and objectives

Our board has agreed the wording of the following aim, principles, values and objectives.

Aim

‘Our aim is to give practical support to transforming secondary education in England by building and enabling a world-class network of innovative, high-performing secondary schools in partnership with business and the wider community.’

Principles

‘Our working principle is “by schools, for schools.”

By this, we mean:

- making sure that improving student achievement and raising academic standards are at the heart of everything we do
- making sure that head teachers take the lead in directing our work
- involving head teachers and other teaching staff in designing and delivering our programmes, activities, research and development
- inspiring, challenging and motivating head teachers and other teaching staff to raise standards, and to support and challenge one another, and
- validating and accrediting educational practices and measuring educational outcomes.’

Values

Our values are an important part of how we go about our work.

Our values are to:

- develop and support all our staff to contribute effectively to our aims and to succeed in their roles
- be open, discuss our progress and take responsibility for our actions, and aim to fully involve all those with an interest in our work
- maintain high standards of honesty and professionalism, and promote equal opportunities in all areas of our work, and
- make good use of our resources and get value for money.

Objectives

We have six objectives that set out our ambition and commitments over the next three years.

- 1 To develop the specialist schools and academies system
- 2 To develop specialisms and curriculum
- 3 To build and embed capacity in schools to raise achievement
- 4 To develop specialist school and academy partnerships with business and the community
- 5 To develop leadership and foster innovation
- 6 To develop our organisation to achieve results’

Managing performance

We contribute to a wide range of education goals. However, we want to understand our contribution and successes. We use certain measures to understand this. We regularly monitor our progress against these measures.

We contribute to priorities set out in the ‘Children’s Plan’ and also the Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets. An important government target we contribute to is to increase to 53% the proportion of pupils at Key Stage 4 who achieve five A* to C GCSEs (and equivalent), including GCSEs in both English and maths, by 2011.



Our objectives

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‘To develop the specialist schools and academies system’

We will develop a wide-ranging specialist educational system. We will work with our members from primary and special schools, trusts, local authorities and from further and higher education to raise achievement and narrow the gap between students.

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An important part of this involves developing specialist schools as centres of excellence and as part of the community.

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We will support head teachers to help meet national targets and contribute to the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) Children’s Plan.

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We will do the following.

1 We will develop the specialist schools programme, with the DCSF.

We will support schools to measure their progress in developing their specialism skills, and we will recognise that re-designation to the specialist system is a central point of improvement and development. We will encourage all other eligible schools to join the programme. We will continue to provide sponsorship for schools, at their initial designation stage and at re-designation (see the glossary for an explanation of these terms).

We will support schools to achieve and keep high-performing specialist school status, to share good practice and knowledge with other schools and contribute to the development of the specialist system.

2 We will promote and support the trust and foundation schools programme with the DCSF, 'Youth Sport Trust' and 'Foundation and Aided Schools National Association'.

We will promote an understanding of what becoming a trust or foundation school means by giving advice, guidance and support to schools and partners interested in the programme, and those working towards trust or foundation status. We will encourage and help trusts and foundation schools to work together.

3 We will support the academies programme, with the DCSF.

We will provide individual support to each academy, encouraging them to share good practice and networking and offer support to academy sponsors.

4 We will develop awareness of the effect of specialism.

We will develop schools' awareness of the effect of specialism, and how best to benefit from their specialism. We will encourage schools to use the 'specialist dividend self-review tool' (see the glossary) to check their progress and find ways to develop their specialism into centres of excellence.

5 We will develop regional and special school networks that encourage and share effective and innovative practice.

We will support our regional school networks, led by head teachers, to develop a programme of activities that respond to the needs and interests of the regions, schools and academies. We want to encourage them to gain as much benefit as possible from being a member of our organisation.

We will develop and support a network of special schools to encourage co-operation between special and mainstream schools to build better skills and expertise in special needs education.

6 We will develop the 'family of schools' programme.

We will develop and support a network of primary schools, to encourage them to share ideas and good practice between other primary schools, secondary schools and academies.

7 We will develop international networks that encourage and share effective and innovative practice.

We will develop an international network of schools to share good practice and to make it possible for English schools to compare themselves with schools in other countries.

'We will develop schools' awareness of the effect of specialism, and how best to benefit from their specialism.'



Our objectives

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‘To develop specialisms and curriculum’

We will help schools and academies develop as centres of excellence in specialism and specialist subjects. We will support the development of effective teaching and learning practice, curriculum and qualifications and 14–19 reforms (which means improved standards in teaching and learning for 14- to 19-year-olds).

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We will do the following.

1 We will develop schools and academies as centres of excellence in specialism with the DCSF.

We will encourage and support schools and academies to:

- develop strong specialisms that allow schools and academies to share this knowledge with other schools and organisations
- develop and provide teaching and learning resources in specialist subjects
- contribute to curriculum and qualification developments, and
- use the 'specialist dividend self-review' tool (see the glossary) to improve performance.

2 We will keep a system-led programme in place for practitioners providing '14-19 reforms', commissioned by the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) working with the DCSF.

- We will develop and deliver the diploma support programme.
We will work with the 'Learning and Skills Network', 'Pearson Education' and 'The Workshop' to build a workforce in schools, colleges and relevant work-based learning organisations that can meet the individual needs of all young people, in line with the 14-19 reforms.
- We will improve applied learning throughout the specialist system.
We will promote high-quality applied learning throughout the specialist system. We will establish a leading role for specialist schools with an applied learning specialism at the centre of each 14-19 consortium.

3 We will develop relationships with schools and their partners as a provider of professional development.

- We will develop national networks of lead practitioners (outstanding classroom teachers) in specialisms and subjects to raise standards.
We will use these to:
 - share knowledge through all our programmes and activities
 - support national educational strategies, and
 - provide individual support to teachers.We will aim to match our lead practitioner model with 'Advanced skills teacher' and 'Excellent teacher' standards.
- We will use the specialist system to improve subject teaching.
We will support schools and academies to design, develop and deliver subject-based professional development, working with experts such as subject associations, chartered societies and university departments. We will improve subject knowledge, teaching methods and the curriculum.

4 We will support the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and the National College for School Leadership to redesign the curriculum.

We will provide a school-led programme to support ideas in all schools as they design a curriculum that encourages their learners to take full advantage of the opportunities offered through the new curriculum for the 11 to 19 age group.

'We will encourage and support schools and academies to develop strong specialisms that allow them to share this knowledge with other schools and organisations.'

Our objectives

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‘To build and embed capacity in schools to raise achievement’

We work to improve levels of achievement in all schools and academies (we use the ‘by schools for schools’ approach to raise standards over the short, medium and longer term).

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We do this by building national, regional and local networks of consultant heads, mentor schools and lead practitioners to provide coaching and share knowledge and expertise.

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We will develop longer-term plans to help every student achieve their full potential in school and help schools meet and improve on the Government’s Public Service Agreement targets and priorities within the ‘Children’s Plan’.

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We will do the following.

1 We will work with schools and academies to provide school-to-school challenge and support.

We will develop a national network of consultant schools and head teachers with wide experience and use them to offer a full range of tailored support to schools and school leaders either direct or through local authorities.

2 We, along with the DCSF, will support schools facing challenge and de-designation.

We will work with schools facing challenges and possible de-designation (see the glossary) from the specialist schools programme to improve them and to gain the benefits from their specialism.

3 We will offer a range of individually created services to schools, academies and local authorities, using our 'by schools, for schools' approach to improving schools and raising standards.

Drawing on the knowledge of our consultant heads and mentor schools, we will offer the RATL spectrum programme (see the glossary). Head teachers and schools will be able to use the whole national network and find the right in-school support that can meet their specific needs. This has the advantage of using head teachers from other areas to provide different but relevant opinions.

4 We will support the successful delivery of the 'Academy Support Programme', along with the DCSF.

We will continue to manage the 'Academy support programme' in 2008 to make sure that academy leaders have a level of support which meets their needs in challenging circumstances. We will support academies to play an increasing role in networking with other schools to share good practice and meet the needs of every young person.

5 We will develop the 'Every Student Achieves' programme.

We will provide the 'Every Student Achieves' programme. We will use information to understand how to 'personalise' learning (in other words, tailoring learning experiences to meet the needs of the individual) so that every young person achieves their potential. We will maintain and improve a network of lead practitioners, continue our work in supporting gifted and talented students, and develop our work in literacy.

6 We will support a focus on raising achievement for 16- to 19-year-olds.

As we move towards raising the age limit for compulsory education, we will work with schools, sixth-form colleges, further-education colleges and employers to prepare for this change. We will encourage creative thinking about information, advice and guidance, and share effective practice widely.

We will provide support to schools and academies when they are expanding, developing or creating sixth forms. We will also provide support for those trying to raise achievement after the age of 16, by supporting the International Baccalaureate (a non-profit-making educational foundation) and helping those working with local partnerships.

7 We will support schools and academies to use and understand information.

We will continue to develop a range of services to help schools and academies to use, interpret and understand information, including the Data Enabler programme (go to our website for more information). This programme will help schools and academies to develop and follow good practice and use achievement information (see the glossary) so that they can check progress, look at improvements needed, and provide individual teaching and learning for students.

'We will develop a national network of consultant schools and head teachers with wide experience and use them to offer a full range of tailored support to schools.'



Our objectives

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‘To develop specialist school and academy partnerships with business and the community’

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We will encourage and support specialist schools to put the community at the centre of their school development plan, developing their ability to work with a wide range of individuals and organisations and to raise achievement for students.

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We will do the following.

1 Alongside the DCSF, we will encourage schools and academies to become involved with the community.

We will develop and support networks of schools and academies to create new partnerships that will raise standards and contribute to learning and wellbeing in the community. This includes through the following programmes.

- Strengthening community engagement
- Specialism and extended services – extended specialist schools and learning
- Adult skills and learning
- Community leadership for teachers and head teachers
- Academies support

2 We will encourage high-quality long-term partnerships that benefit all those organisations, schools, academies, businesses and universities that are involved.

We will support networks of schools, academies and universities to help them work together so that they achieve high-quality, long-term partnerships, to:

- improve teaching and learning in specialisms
- encourage all young people to get the skills and qualifications needed for higher-level study and employment, and
- encourage students to progress.

‘We will develop and support networks of schools and academies to create new partnerships that will raise standards and contribute to learning and wellbeing in the community.’

Our objectives

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‘To develop leadership and foster innovation’

We will work with schools, academies and head teachers to inspire teachers to move into leadership roles and to develop the ability of existing leaders, by designing and providing opportunities to develop leadership skills.

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We will work with young people to develop student leadership and to ‘personalise’ their learning experience (in other words, tailoring learning experiences to meet the needs of the individual).

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We will encourage school-based innovation, working with leading academic institutions and educational specialists. We will support the development of sustainable schools (see the glossary).

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We will do the following.

1 We will develop leadership skills in schools and academies by using the specialist system.

We will work with schools and academies to design, develop and deliver university-approved leadership programmes for teachers. We will personalise the leadership programmes by developing modules that support the programmes.

2 We will support the delivery of leadership priorities by working with the National College for School Leadership. This will include:

- developing leaders – in primary education
- future leaders
- London leadership, and
- the ‘Academy leadership induction programme’.

3 We will develop and encourage student leadership.

We will encourage students to get involved in the way schools are run, to contribute to designing services, and to have more say in what happens across the education service. We will develop a student network to support student leadership.

4 We will encourage school-based innovation.

We will encourage school-based development and research. We will work with schools and families to develop and test new technology and ways of teaching and learning including the following programmes.

- **‘Personalising learning’** – we will encourage new thinking and practices in teaching and learning across all areas of education.
- **‘System redesign’** – we will develop innovative networks to improve professional practices so they are more effective.
- **Family involvement to raise achievement** – we will develop ways of involving families in their children’s learning, by encouraging schools and academies to review and develop their current practice.

5 We will work with schools to take the right steps to becoming ‘sustainable schools’ through:

- a school-led network of support for professional learning
- challenging ideas
- delivering and sharing innovation, and
- working with DCSF and other partners.

We will develop and offer a programme that will support schools to become system leaders – to change the education system, as they develop, use and share outcomes to encourage, improve and support others to meet National Framework for Sustainable Schools levels.

‘We will encourage students to get involved in the way schools are run, to contribute to designing services, and to have more say in what happens across the education service.’



Our objectives

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‘To develop our organisation to achieve results’

We will continue to support our organisation in its development by providing effective, high-quality services that respond to change, feedback and new priorities.

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‘We will continue to work with a wide range of partners to help us achieve our objectives.’

People

We will continue to develop the abilities of our staff, and those who work with us who are based in schools. As well as normal training methods, we will provide online training for staff. We will also identify development paths for all our professional disciplines and work towards achieving ‘Investor in People’ status again.

Within our organisation, we aim to represent all the communities we serve. We will promote our commitment to all communities, and we will show this in everything we do. We will support the principles of our equality scheme for race, sex and disability by building them into our processes, behaviours and programmes of work.

Leadership

Our commitments include:

- continuing to use the European Foundation for Quality Management excellence model to plan improvements
- keeping our information and security-management systems award ISO 27001
- keeping our Environmental Management System award EN14001, and
- gaining the Health and Safety Management System award EN18001.

We will bring in the agreed changes to make sure we have a strong system to govern our work.

Policy and strategy

We will continue to use and review our strategy and processes for planning business processes. We will use the planning process to help us work effectively, after taking account of the environment in which we work, and we will use wide-ranging information to contribute to our plans.

We will finish putting recommendations into practice from our review of arrangements to manage risk.

Partnerships and resources

We will continue to work with a wide range of partners including schools, businesses, sponsors, government departments, non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs) and business partners to help us achieve our objectives.

We will support and improve the head teacher steering groups to help strengthen their contribution to our work, and to play a part in helping develop national policies.

We will continue to manage funds effectively through strong financial systems, concentrating on providing financial information and other information on our performance, to support responsible decision-making and planning. We will look at ways to compare our financial performance to others by benchmarking, and continue our yearly ‘value for money’ audits.

We will improve the quality of the information available to everyone through our new website, which will meet the needs of individual users.

We will review how we manage, share and keep information to make sure that we are efficient.

Processes

We will raise awareness of our work and its purpose by delivering our marketing and communications strategy. We will:

- build support for the specialist schools, academies and all our networks
- share examples of good practice between schools, and
- celebrate the success of schools and academies.

We will develop our communications skills to help us deliver impressive conferences and events.

We will develop a Quality Management System to achieve the ISO9001 award.

Budget

The table shows our budget split into programmes and activities.

	2007–2008 Actual budget £million	2008–2009 Planned budget £million
Income		
DCSF Specialist Schools Programme	13.9	15.3
Other DCSF programmes	21.7	3.9
	35.6	19.2
DCSF contracts	2.1	10.0
DCSF subtotal	37.7	29.2
Charges for our services		
- Diplomas (QIA)	0.0	35.1
- Income from schools	14.2	14.6
- Other	3.9	4.6
	18.1	54.3
Investment income	0.4	0.6
Restricted donations	1.0	0.7
	57.2	84.8

Managing risk

We are committed to using risk-management procedures that are consistent with best practice in both the public sector and the commercial sector.

In summary, we manage risk by regularly reviewing and updating our corporate risk register.

By managing performance effectively, we can manage risk on a day-to-day basis. We look at risks in many ways. Each month we check our progress against the commitments in the corporate plan, and the financial risk register. Operational risk is backed up by our reserves policy. We have an audit committee that meets regularly and is an important part of our approach to managing risk. We also have an agreed programme of audit commitments during the plan.





Structure and contacts

Our structure

We are governed by a board. The trustees support high standards of corporate governance, which are the systems and processes we follow. We also aim to follow the recommendations of the Charity Commission. The trustees are listed below.

Sir James Hill Bt. OBE DL

Chairman
Chairman of governors, Dixons academy

Dr William Cavendish

Director of Health and Wellbeing,
Department of Health

Dr Robin Clarke

Vice chairman

Martyn Coles

Principal, The City of London Academy (Southwark)

Dr John Dunford OBE

General secretary, Association of School
and College Leaders

Sir Dexter Hutt

Executive head, Ninestiles Federation

Judy Moorhouse OBE

Chair, General Teaching Council for England

Dame Mary Richardson

Dr Elizabeth Sidwell

Chief Executive, Haberdashers' Aske's Federation

Nick Stuart CB

Chairman, National Institute of Adult
Continuing Education

Sir Cyril Taylor, GBE

Chair, American Institute for Foreign Study

Michael Wilkins

Executive principal, Outwood Grange College



We are managed by the senior management team, led by Elizabeth Reid, the Chief Executive. She is supported by the following six directors.



David Crossley
Director of Achievement Networks



Jennifer Jupe
Director of Specialism and Curriculum Networks



Colin Kerr
Director of Finance and Corporate Services



Lesley King
Director of Academies Networks



Ian Turner
Director of Strategy and Programme Networks



Sue Williamson
Director of Leadership and Innovation Networks

Our contact details

We are based in central London and have regional offices throughout England. These offices allow us to work with schools, our partners and businesses in the community. We also have offices in other countries through our international networks of schools.

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Glossary

Academies. Academies are publicly funded, independent schools that provide a first-class, free education to local pupils of all abilities. They bring an original approach to school leadership, using the skills of sponsors and other supporters.

They are 'all-ability' schools set up by sponsors from business, religious or voluntary groups working in creative partnerships with central government and local education partners. The Department for Children, Schools and Families pay the costs of running the academies.

The academies' programme aims to deliver real improvements in standards. Most academies are in areas of disadvantage.

Achievement information. Examination results and other measures of student progress and achievement.

Applied learning. Learning to prepare for the world of work. Students involved in applied learning often work on real projects set by businesses.

Designation. Schools awarded specialist status.

De-designation. Schools that have their specialist status withdrawn because they are failing to meet minimum performance standards.

General Advisory Council. See the definition for stakeholder advisory council.

iNet. International Networking for Educational Transformation. Our network to encourage schools from different countries to share good innovative practice.

International Baccalaureate. An international non-profit-making educational foundation, set up in 1968 in Geneva, Switzerland. The organisation runs three programmes for elementary, middle, and high schools, which provide schools with an international curriculum intended to be acceptable to universities around the world.

Lead practitioners. Outstanding teachers paid to work with other teachers in their area, to share ideas for improving teaching and learning.

Non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs).

Organisations that are not part of a government department and carry out their work at arm's length from Ministers, but Ministers are ultimately responsible to Parliament for the activities of these NDPBs that are sponsored by their department. There are four types of NDPB (executive, advisory, tribunal and boards of visitors), and they do not include public corporations, National Health Service (NHS) organisations or public broadcasting authorities.

RATL spectrum programme. A programme aimed at local authorities and schools that uses the whole national network to find the right in-school support to meet the specific needs of a school and has the advantage of using head teachers from other areas to provide their opinions.

Redesignation. Schools get back their specialist status by meeting the necessary performance standards during an Ofsted inspection.

Special school. A school for pupils with statements of special educational needs (SEN), whose needs cannot be fully met in mainstream schools.

Specialism. The curriculum area in which a specialist school chooses to focus. Schools can choose from 10 specialisms, special educational needs or applied learning specialism.

Specialist schools. Specialist schools work in partnership with private-sector sponsors and are supported by extra government funding. Specialist schools focus on those subjects that relate to their chosen specialist subject, but must also meet the National Curriculum requirements and deliver a broad and balanced education to all pupils.

Any maintained secondary school in England can apply for specialist status in one of 10 specialisms: arts, business and enterprise, engineering, humanities, languages, mathematics and computing, music, science, sports, and technology. Schools can also have any two additional specialisms.

The 'Specialist School Programme' promotes improvement by giving opportunities for schools to work to their strengths, which allows them to deliver effective teaching and learning in their specialist area of expertise, as well as across the curriculum, and to drive innovation.

Specialist schools work with named partner schools for the benefit of students outside their own school boundaries, and with other groups of people in the community. This makes sure the programme has an effect by helping to create wide-ranging networks that share good practice, expertise and knowledge.

Specialist dividend self-review tool. This is our online tool kit that helps schools to review and assess their progress as a specialist school, and measure their 'specialist dividend', which is the additional value that specialist status gives them.

Specialist system. A term used by Charles Clarke, former Secretary of State for Education, to describe the time when almost all secondary schools in England would be specialist. The term was used to suggest that groups of specialist schools with different specialisms could work together to give higher standards of education than any one school could on its own.

SSAT consultant head teacher. Usually, a practising head teacher of a secondary school who we have approved to give advice and support to other schools.

SSAT consultant school. A school that we have approved to give advice and support to other schools, using staff from senior leaders through to expert classroom teachers.

Stakeholder advisory council. The SSAT's stakeholder advisory council, which we call our General Advisory Council, consists of no more than 30 people appointed by the board, who between them have a wide range of educational experience and expertise. The council, which meets twice a year, advises the board on developments in the secondary education sector, to help the board to develop its strategy and policy.

Sustainable schools. These are schools that aim to teach young people to care for themselves, for others and for the planet. A sustainable school prepares young people for a lifetime of 'sustainable' living, through its teaching and its day-to-day practices. These schools are guided by a commitment to:

- care for ourselves (our health and wellbeing)
- care for others (whatever their age, culture or where they live), and
- care for the planet (both locally and worldwide).

The board. The board of trustees of the SSAT.

Trust school. A state-funded school supported by a charitable trust. The trust is made up of a range of partners that includes businesses, universities and colleges. The trust appoints school governors and supports the school in many ways to give new opportunities to young people.



Specialist Schools
and Academies Trust
THE SCHOOLS NETWORK™

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