



Oasis Academy  
Becoming an  
Councillor  
Information Booklet 2013-2014

 **asis**



## Welcome from Oasis Founder, Steve Chalke

I began Oasis in 1985 with a vision to build inclusive communities, where everyone has hope, feels that they matter and is given the opportunity to achieve their full potential. Oasis' first project, No. 3, which I set up with my wife Cornelia, was a hostel for young homeless people in Peckham, South London. However, it was always my aim that one day Oasis would not only run housing projects but also other services including youth programmes, schools and hospitals.

Oasis' mission is to ensure that people and whole communities are offered the breadth of support, depth of education and spectrum of opportunity that they deserve, in order to reach their God-given potential. We know that individuals can only truly thrive when their community flourishes around them, so we work in 'community hubs' to provide a range of integrated and high quality services that support people holistically; educationally, physically, socially, spiritually, emotionally, economically and environmentally. Oasis has now developed into a movement of many thousands of people, working in ten countries around the world, who are all committed to this goal.

As part of this, our first three Oasis Academies opened in 2007 in the UK; the beginnings of a national network which has now developed into a substantial family of primary, secondary and all-through schools. Though each Oasis Academy aims to serve the needs of its local community in its own unique way, all share our ethos and holistic approach to education. Our Academies seek to provide a welcoming environment for students of all faiths and none, as well as for their parents and carers.

Education is never just about what happens during the formal school day. We seek to provide a rich and balanced environment for all our students which develops informed and active learners who can explore questions, seek answers and solve problems. Our hope is that Oasis students will become people who care passionately about their learning, their neighbours, their communities and their planet.

Academy Councillors play a vital role in the life of each Academy and its wider community, as you will discover as you read on. Thank you for considering this opportunity to play a key role in supporting the children, young people and families that, together, we serve. I look forward to working with you.

## An introduction to Oasis Academy Councils, Head of Governance Services, Norma Downer-Powell

Firstly, thank you for your interest in working with Oasis as an Academy Councillor.

Oasis Community Learning is one of the largest and fastest growing multi-Academy sponsors in England, with 36 Academies opened since 2004. Our mission is to create and sustain a network of excellent learning communities where students can realise their full potential.

### **Oasis have schools nationwide in development for which we are recruiting Academy Councillors.**

Oasis also have other schools nationwide in development. This booklet explains our model of governance and gives you some key facts about what the role of Academy Councillor involves.

There has never been a more exciting and challenging time to be a volunteer in education; the education landscape has shifted significantly in the past few years and has challenged the emotional, intellectual and political awareness of those involved in various ways.

The role of Academy Councils demands greater professional capacity to operate at a leadership level, at the same time also incorporating local knowledge and expertise from parents and a range of other people from the community.

We are looking for Academy Councillors with the right skills and experiences to be effective locally. Oasis governance works at both a national and local level, as explained later, but essentially, we rely on Academy Councillors in our Academies to be local champions.

One of the other key areas for Academy Councillors is to robustly hold senior leaders to account for performance at their Academies; working collaboratively to ensure standards are raised for all our students, regardless of their starting point.





## Who is Oasis?

Oasis was established in 1985 and has now grown into a group of charities working to deliver housing, training, youth work, health care, family support and primary, secondary and higher education. We also work in nine other countries in Europe as well as Asia, Africa and North America.

Oasis in the UK started life delivering a handful of youth projects. Over the last 28 years it has gained high levels of expertise in mentoring young people and working with them through different stages of transition; developed housing projects for homeless young people; established The Oasis College for Higher Education which specialises in both under-graduate and post-graduate studies in children's work, youth work and family practice and now offers courses to over 400 students a year; started STOP THE TRAFFIK – a global campaign against human trafficking working in almost 100 countries; and more recently, through the development of Oasis Community Learning, entered primary, secondary and all-through education.

Oasis Community Learning (OCL), was established in 2004 with the express purpose of transforming learning, lives and communities through the development of Oasis Academies and in September 2007 opened the first three of our Academies. From October 2013, OCL is now a family of 36 Academies throughout England.

### Primary Progress

Of the Oasis primary academies which have joined us in the last year, we are delighted to report that, as a group of academies, they have exceeded the national average progress measures in Reading, Writing and maths. This is a significant achievement in such a short space of time.

### Secondary Progress

In terms of our secondary education provision, this year we were delighted to announce our GCSE results which showed a significant rise in the number of students in our academies achieving five A\*-C grades, including English and maths.

The scale of this improvement over the last three years far outstrips the national average, demonstrating the strength and depth of Oasis' unique commitment to raising educational standards and developing wider community engagement.

In August 2013, across all 12 of our secondary Academies, 52% of students achieved 5+ A\*-C including English and maths, which consolidates our achievement in 2012, when Oasis was noted in the Academies Annual Report to be the most improved academy group, improving by ten percentage points.

Oasis' vision is for community – a place where everyone is included, making a contribution and reaching their potential. In this, we are committed to working in an inclusive, integrated, empowering and comprehensive way so that all people experience wholeness and fullness of life.

Oasis 'Hubs' are centres of activity that provide integrated, high quality and diverse services to benefit the whole person and the whole community. Our Hubs embody Oasis' values, resources and expertise through a wide variety of activities, partnerships and infrastructure.

We have developed an array of interventions including youth clubs, children's clubs, cross-phase projects working in partnership with our feeder schools, health and well-being initiatives, parenting support groups, breakfast clubs, after school clubs and other forms of supplementary education. We also pay for, and supply, youth workers, chaplains, family support workers and other community support staff.

Our goal is to raise aspirations, unlock potential and work to achieve excellence in education, consequently transforming lives, transforming learning and transforming whole communities.

A core element of each of our Hubs is to create and sustain a network of world-class learning communities.





## Oasis Governance

The Oasis Governance Model is different to the way a governing body in a non-Academy/traditional school undertakes governance. Essentially, there are two elements to the governance of the Oasis Academies – local governance that is delivered via the Principal and the Academy Council, and national governance, delivered via the National Executive and the Board of Trustees.

The principle of the Oasis Governance Model is that local and national governance work together; each providing an element of governance that the other cannot. Working together, however, both parties provide a very strong governance model.



## The Academy Council

The AC normally consists of a mix of local people – parents, sponsor nominees, academy staff and a representative from the Local Authority, with a maximum of 15 people on the Council. A member of the National Executive may sit on the Council to provide a link back to the National Executive and the Board.

## The 4 key roles of an Academy Council

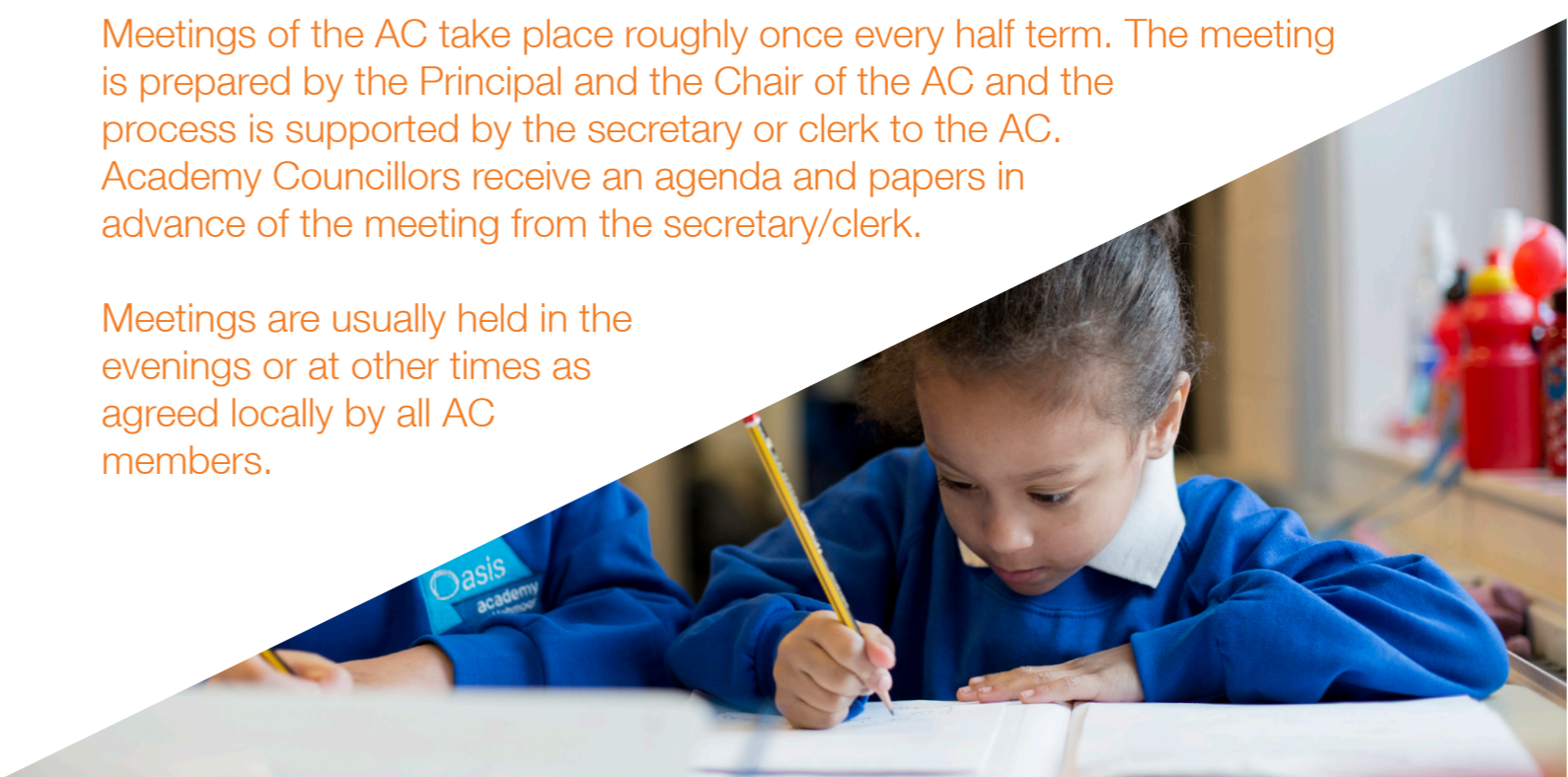
1. To serve as “champions” of the Education Charter in the Academy and the local Oasis Hub and to be “a champion” of the local Academy to National Oasis and Oasis in general. In other words, this role is first and foremost about local people giving local input.
2. To act as “a critical friend” to the Principal and the Academy at local level.
3. To act as “a sounding board” for the Principal and their leadership team, and represent the views of different parts of the school community to influence decision making.
4. To continually review the overall impact of the Academy amongst the people it exists to serve, make suggestions for improvement and ensure that the Oasis ethos remains at the heart of the Academy community.

## Expectations

Oasis understands that the role of an Academy Councillor is voluntary, however, in order for the Academy Council to function efficiently and effectively, there are certain expectations of AC members in order to achieve this.

Meetings of the AC take place roughly once every half term. The meeting is prepared by the Principal and the Chair of the AC and the process is supported by the secretary or clerk to the AC. Academy Councillors receive an agenda and papers in advance of the meeting from the secretary/clerk.

Meetings are usually held in the evenings or at other times as agreed locally by all AC members.





## What other tasks would I undertake as an Academy Councillor?

- Assist in setting priorities for Academy improvement
- Support the work of the Academy in the community
- Help to ensure that the Academy's money is well spent
- Help to champion the Oasis ethos to ensure that it remains at the heart of the Academy community
- Positively challenge and proactively support the Principal and Academy Leadership Team
- Regularly review the Academy's performance in relation to Key Performance Indicators
- Share professional expertise and extend personal and professional networks to develop the Academy and local hub. This can be done through linking with key curriculum and/or other areas of interest/work (e.g. Equality, Health and Safety, Safeguarding).
- Sitting on complaints and grievance appeal panels where necessary.

## Locations of open Oasis Academies



## Case Study

Sue Wates, an Academy Councillor at Oasis Academy Johanna, shares her experiences of being part of the Academy Council at our primary Academy in Lambeth.

When I was first asked to be an Academy Councillor I declined as I am not a parent and felt that I did not know anything about education. However, I am now so glad that I was encouraged to give it a go and have learnt so much.

I work in the NHS and part of my role involves governance; ensuring that our service is safe, has high standards, has up-to-date policies and procedures, sets clear objectives, undertakes audits and responds to feedback, all of which I feel has been transferable knowledge and experience that I was then able to bring to the role of Academy Councillor.

My link-role on the Academy Council is Inclusion, Equality and Pupil Premium, with responsibility to raise the profile of inclusion within the Academy Council. I meet regularly with the Special Educational Needs Coordinator in the Academy to discuss what is needed to enhance learning for the children with special needs and, from there, make recommendations to the Academy Council, such as funding additional Speech and Language Therapist sessions.

I've had the opportunity to attend some great training for the role, which has helped me to understand how to ask the right questions and supportively challenge the Academy to achieve an outstanding education and experience for the children.

I've also enjoyed attending different events at the Academy; concerts, carnivals, as well as open afternoons for parents and carers. The leavers' assembly is a highlight and great reward for the tiny part I have played, as each of the Year 6 pupils confidently and positively report back on their time at Oasis Academy Johanna.

Oasis Academy Johanna is a wonderful school and it's great to hear about all the exciting things the children experience and how innovative teaching is now, compared with when I was at school!





[www.oasiscommunitylearning.org](http://www.oasiscommunitylearning.org)

Tel. 020 7921 4200