

department for  
children, schools and families



**THE BIRKENHEAD HIGH SCHOOL ACADEMY**

**IN WIRRAL**

**EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FOR AN ACADEMY**

**Section 1: Executive Summary**

This is a proposal for Birkenhead High School on the Wirral, which is a successful independent day school for girls, aged 3-19, owned by the Girl's Day School Trust, to become an academy.

The Academy will be sponsored principally by the Girls' Day School Trust (GDST). Founded in 1872, the GDST is the largest group of independent schools in the UK, and currently educates over 20,000 students aged 3 to 19 in 29 schools. As a charity it reinvests all income in its schools for the benefit of its pupils. It has a reputation for pioneering innovation in the education and care of pupils and is recognised at home and abroad for educational excellence. The GDST is also the sponsor of The Belvedere Academy in Liverpool.

The GDST is currently in discussion with a Russell Group University to be a co-sponsor of the Academy. As the proposed co-sponsor this university would bring both an ongoing aspirational link for the school in terms of educational excellence and support for a strong international dimension to the school.

Birkenhead High School Academy will be a non-denominational, all-through (3-19) girls' school. It will be located at the current site of Birkenhead High School.

The area in which the school is sited, the Wirral, is an area of contrast between an affluent western area, along the Dee Estuary, and the east of the borough, the traditional employment area centred on Birkenhead, along the River Mersey. Whilst the former is an area of high environmental quality with high property values and low unemployment, the latter provides continuous built development, including areas of severe decline and educational and social deprivation.

Overall the council is the 44th most deprived out of 150 in England. Unemployment is higher in the eastern wards and the quality of the

environment is poor in a significant number of areas, aspects of which are subject to large scale regeneration initiatives.

It is proposed that the Academy maintains a size of nursery provision similar to the current school's at 18 FTE places, slightly increases its primary and secondary capacity to 280 places for 5-11s (a two form entry of 40 per year group) and 500 places for 11-16s (a four form entry of 100 per year group), and provides all-through 16-18 provision of c. 200 places. This size of Sixth Form will enable the school to have places for all the students coming through the school into the Sixth Form, as well as offering some limited opportunities to a small number of other external students where they would benefit from this pathway as part of their 14-19 experience.

Comment [h1]: Not the ward it is in

Comment [h2]: This is a large increase from its current 17. Significant impact on primary.

Comment [h3]: This is a significant increase from its current 60. Change of admission criteria will impact on different schools.

The Academy will therefore provide a total of 980 places for 5-19s with a nursery of c.18 for 3-5 year olds. This is broadly in line with the current school's registered capacity and with its pupil numbers in the very recent past. The Academy's nursery provision is already included within the totality of universal early years provision on the Wirral. The increase in the size of the Sixth Form provision is not expected to impact negatively on the large and strong FE College and local grammar schools and will, through 14-19 collaboration, increase the range of options open to pupils from other schools within the Wirral.

Comment [h4]: Sixth Form College?

Admission of the Academy cohorts will be phased, with entry only at three key entry points in the school – Reception, Year 7 and the Sixth Form – in September 2009, thereby allowing the Academy to expand gradually year on year, reaching its full capacity of c.980 in 2016. This gradual expansion will minimise the impact on other schools in the Wirral, while helping to maintain the ethos and aspirational culture of the school.

The Academy will cease academic selection and instead admit an all-ability intake. In Year 7, alongside pupils feeding through from the primary section of the all-through school, and where the Academy is oversubscribed, priority will be given to looked-after children, 10% selection by aptitude in one of its chosen primary specialisms – Music – on the same basis as other specialist schools, and on fair banding of applications from across a comparable geographic community to that currently served by the school.

For Reception and Nursery, admissions will also be representative of a comparable geographic community to that currently served by the school to ensure the school continues to maintain its strong community links. Religious affiliation will not form any part of the selection criteria. After looked-after children, siblings will take precedence throughout the all-through establishment. Entry to the Sixth Form will be subject to the school's agreed minimum entry criteria.

Comment [h5]: Borough wide? In that case the deprivation factor is not relevant. Is this realistic at primary for a non-selective school?

The Birkenhead High School Academy will continue to provide the high quality education of Birkenhead High School to the local and wider community, maintaining the ethos and aspirations of its predecessor school and, by providing high quality, free, non-selective places in the Wirral, build on principles of access and inclusion and a commitment to add value to pupils

with a range of talents, which have been the mainstay of the GDST's philosophy since its foundation. It will expect to retain the admirable ethos of the predecessor school, its culture of high expectations and raising aspirations, but attract a wider range of pupils, and embody the potential for innovation and educational excellence offered by the all-through setting.

Key themes of the educational vision for the Academy will be:

**A distinctive ethos built on a culture of high expectations, raising aspirations and the achievement of each pupil's personal best** – based on principles of access and inclusion and a commitment to add value to pupils with a range of talents.

**Raising aspirations and standards through the all-through school model** in which girls are given the opportunity to develop in a consistent environment dedicated to excellence from the youngest age.

**Excellence** – the GDST is committed to maintaining excellence in teaching and learning. The aim is to imbue each year group with values and aspirations of excellence, and communicate highest standards and expectations.

**Personal development** – the GDST is committed to fostering a lively spirit of enquiry and to developing individuals who are confident, competent and compassionate, responsive to their environment and to the concerns and needs of others.

**Enrichment and enhancement** – the pupils and staff will have access to the full range of enrichment that other GDST schools currently enjoy.

**Working with the local community and in partnership with local schools** – already a major element in the wider educational work of the GDST and its schools. The GDST envisages delivering this through the Academy's wrap around care provision, extensive and diverse extra curricular clubs programme, community service, Young Enterprise and Duke of Edinburgh Award schemes, gifted and talented and honours programmes, and master classes.

**Drawing on support and best practice from the GDST family** – including innovative career programmes to prepare students for higher education and the workplace, a wide range of cross-GDST sports competitions, the Minerva Network for alumni, extensive staff training and development schedule, the provision of innovative educational leadership programmes and the challenge of detailed benchmarking across GDST schools.

**A clear international dimension**

In order to prepare pupils for life and work in the global economy an international dimension will underpin all aspects of the Academy's curriculum and activities and linking with both the GDST's extensive international programmes and, it is hoped, with the international work of the proposed

University co-sponsor.

**The Academy will have music and maths as its specialisms.** Music and maths, and the cross-curricular links between music and maths, are areas of particular strength for both the GDST and the school. The GDST envisages significant cross-GDST and cross-authority engagement and outreach work to extend this programme at the Academy and spread best practice more widely, especially at 16-19 in the teaching of music and maths.

The GDST considers that the building and facilities, which are very well-maintained, require some new build or refurbishment in order to deliver the vision of the Academy as follows: – enhanced specialist facilities for the Academy's specialisms of music and maths across all phases (i.e. recording and control room, ensemble room and possibly a concert facility), enhancements of the reception/main entrance areas for primary and secondary provision to enrich the welcome for parents and students at all phases of the Academy, library and learning resources, ICT facilities in the junior school, staff workspaces and administration, enhanced dining facilities, additional general teaching and learning areas and social spaces and enhanced nursery facilities. In terms of space the most appropriate development opportunity would be on the site of the current assembly and dining hall facilities.

The school will cease to be fee-paying. The Academy will be funded in line with the Wirral's fair funding formula through an annual grant provided by the DCSF. The sponsor will also be seeking, as has been the case for The Belvedere Academy, funding which recognises the school's transitional requirements. The DCSF will provide any necessary capital funding for both the secondary and primary elements of the Academy.

Comment [h6]: If it does not grow it will not be viable. If it does grow it will impact on other schools. They can't have it both ways

Comment [h7]: Where from?

The new Academy will be proud to be a lead member of the independent sector stream of the Academies programme – of which its sister school the Belvedere Academy is the pioneer school. As a major independent school becoming an Academy, Birkenhead High School Academy will be accessible to all, providing high quality, educationally excellent, free, non-selective places to the local and wider community.

### 1.1 Key statistics

1. Predecessor School- Educational Attainment- KS2 2006									
	English		Maths			Science			Average point score
	L4+	L5	L4+	L5	L4+	L5	L4+	L5	
National Average	79%	32%	76%	33%	87%	46%			27.8%
LA Average	81%	35%	77%	34%	89%	48%			28.1%
School	98%	45%	93%	66%	98%	75%			

### 1.2 Key statistics

1. Predecessor School – Educational Attainment						
	GCSE 5 A*-C 2004	GCSE 5 A*-C 2005	GCSE 5 A*-C 2006	GCSE 5 A*-C 2007*	GCSE 2006 (inc E + M)	GCSE 2007 (inc E + M)*
National Average	53.7%	56.3%	58.5%	61%	45.3%	46%
LA Average	54%	57%	57.7%	61%	46.3%	48%
School	97%	95%	100%	94%	96%	90%

\* This is a provisional and unvalidated figure released at the discretion of the school and Local Authority.

Comment [h11]: Add Wirral girls' selective schools

2. Predecessor School – Deprivation			
	Pupils drawn from the bottom % of the most deprived wards in the country	School situated in the bottom % of the most deprived wards in the country	% pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM)
National Average			13.6%
LA Average	-	-	%
School	%	%	%

3. Predecessor School – Basic Characteristics						
	Pupils on Roll (3-11)	Pupils on Roll (11-16)	Pupils on Roll (16-19)	School Capacity	% pupils with statement of SEN	% pupils with EAL
National Average	-	-	-	-	2.2%	9.5%
LA Average	-	-	-	-	%	%
School	235*	334*	96*		%	%

\* As at 2006/07 latest full year figures.

4. Proposed Academy – Basic Characteristics					
	Planned number of pupils (3-11)	Planned number of pupils (11-16)	Planned number of pupils (16-19)	Planned maximum number	Specialism(s)
Academy	280 5-11s + 18 FTE in nursery	500	200	980 5-18s + 18 FTE in nursery	MUSIC MATHS
	Opening Date	New Build Date	Building Route	Faith Designation	Sponsor(s)
Academy	September 2009	2010-12 provisional	PfS	N/A	Girls Day School Trust (+ a Russell Group University)

## Section 2: The Predecessor School (s)

2.1 Will the Academy replace a school (Or schools)?	Yes	√
	No	

*If Yes, go to Section 2.2. If No, go to Section 3.1 Please select:*

### 2.2 Basic Characteristics

School Name: Birkenhead High School

School Address: 86 Devonshire Place, Prenton, Merseyside, CH43 1TY

Local Authority: Wirral (LA Code: 344)

Type of Establishment:

Community School	
Foundation School	
Voluntary Aided (VA) School	
Voluntary (VC) School	
City Technology College	
Independent	√
Other	

(if other please specify: )

Gender

Co-Educational	
Single Sex Boys	
Single Sex Girls	√

Age range: 3-19

Is this a designated Faith School:

Yes with faith admissions	
No, with faith admissions	
No	√

(Faith: )

Specialism(s) (if applicable): N/A

### 2.3 School Population

Admissions Number: 665

Comment [h14]: This can't be right

#### PRIMARY

Current number of pupils on roll as at: 209 + 26 nursery (latest full year figures as at end of academic year 2006/2007)

X R: 17 Yr1: 19 Yr 2: 23 Yr 3: 29 Yr 4: 40 Yr 5: 36 Yr 6: 45

Number of Reception Year pupils admitted in:

Comment [h15]: They are proposing to double their numbers on reception in the context of falling cohorts

September 2003: 23

September 2004: 23

September 2005: 18

September 2006: 17

#### SECONDARY

Current number of pupils on roll as at: 334 (latest full year figures as at end of academic year 2006/2007)

Yr 7: 55 Yr 8: 69 Yr 9: 66 Yr 10: 73 Yr 11: 71

Comment [h16]: They are talking about increasing their intake by 100% at a time of falling cohort This is not marginal.

Number of Year 7 pupils admitted in:

September 2003: 74

September 2004: 66

September 2005: 63

September 2006: 55

Number of Year 12-13 students at the school in:

September 2003: 142  
September 2004: 142  
September 2005: 127  
September 2006: 96

**Comment [h17]:** They expect to increase their size by 100%. What is the evidence and business case for this?

Percentage of pupil population who joined or left the school other than at the start or finish of the academic year in:

	2003	2004	2005	2006
Junior	3.6	6.1	15.2	9.3
Senior	2.0	1.2	1.6	3.8

#### 2.4 Admissions

A copy of the current Admissions Policy is attached. Mark if agree ✓

#### 2.5 Leadership

Name of Head teacher: Mrs Carole Evans

Head teacher has been in post for: 10 Years 4 Months

#### 2.6 School Improvement

Intervention status:

None	✓
Special Measures	
School Improvement Notice	
Interim executive Board	
Serious Weakness	
Causing Concern	

Please provide details:

The current school is a high performing independent sector school, joining the Academies programme under the independent sector stream of the



Academies programme.

Does the predecessor school receive any external support and/or is in receipt of a tailored external support package?	Yes	
	No	√

If yes, please provide details:

Please provide details of the school's involvement in any local collaborative arrangements, such as Excellence in Cities: N/A

## 2.7 Finance

Does the predecessor school currently have a budget deficit?*	Yes	
	No	√

If yes, please provide details:

Does the predecessor school currently have an in year deficit?	Yes	
	No	√

If yes, please provide details of the LA's plan to reduce the deficit:

The Birkenhead High School makes an operating surplus before accounting for the central contribution from the GDST for the costs of bursaries and scholarships, which are provided in order to support the GDST's commitment to inclusion and access.

Comment [h18]: Astonishing!  
What are their budget projections?

## Section 3: The Proposed Academy

### 3.1 Academy Population

Planned Maximum Number: 980 + 18 FTE nursery places

Gender:

Co-Educational	
Single Sex Boys	
Single Sex Girls	√

Forms of Entry: 2 FE Primary Admissions Number: 40 Primary  
: 4 FE Secondary : 100 Secondary

### Primary and Pre-School

Nursery (age 3-5): 18 FTE

Years 1-6 (age 5-11): 280

### Secondary

Years 7-11 (age 11-16): 500

Years 12-13 (age 16-19): 200

### **Please provide a detailed justification for the size of the proposed Academy:\***

There are four distinct residential areas on the Wirral – Birkenhead, Wallasey, Bebington and Deeside. Birkenhead contains areas of severe decline and deprivation with one ward having the highest levels of child poverty in England. Overall the Wirral has 138 maintained schools, serving a school population of nearly 55,000 pupils. There are 22 secondary schools, four of which are voluntary aided and two are foundation schools.

The Academy will increase the accessibility of non-selective, high quality, free places for the local and wider community in a high performing school. It will also provide, through its all-through ethos and model, an increased choice of school models for the community. As part of the independent sector stream of the Academies programme, the development of Birkenhead High School as an Academy will strongly support government policy “to enable the school to make its excellent education more widely available than in the past” ('Academies and Independent Schools' prospectus).

The all-through model, with the capacity in the Sixth Form to support the expectation that every girl will progress through to the Sixth Form, will also support the agenda to ensure all students have a clear 14-19 pathway.

**Comment [h19]:** What percentage currently progress, albeit to other institutions?

The Academy will also be responding to an educational demand from the local and wider community which can be clearly seen in the historical numbers at the school in recent times under the Assisted Places scheme.

**Comment [h20]:** Evidence?

In real terms, the intended increase in pupil numbers will be relatively small, given the phasing of the intake and the spread across the 3-19 age groups and the Academy will be a comparable size to the size of the school in the very recent past. When the proposed Academy is full, the number of pupils aged 11-16 and pupils aged 16-19 will increase by a maximum of 156 and 104 students.

**Comment [h21]:** The rise is significant in terms of the falling cohort when the LA is removing places. They propose to insulate themselves from this fall. What is the evidence that they will succeed? If they do, other schools are at risk; if they do not, the public purse is.

The impact on nearby schools is likely to be marginal because:

- the Academy will supply a relatively small number of places in each year group;
- the relatively small increase will be managed across both the primary and secondary phases
- the Academy will serve pupils from a wide catchment area;
- expansion up to the Academy's full capacity will take place over a period

- of years rather than immediately with entry points at Reception, Year 7 and Sixth Form only.
- o the Academy's nursery provision is already included within the totality of universal early years provision on the Wirral
- o the increase in the size of the Sixth Form provision is not expected to impact negatively on the large and strong FE College and local grammar schools and will, through 14-19 collaboration, increase the range of options open to pupils from other schools within the Wirral.

Comment [h22]: Sixth form college?

### 3.2 All-age Academies\*

**If the Academy proposes to cater for primary pupils, please provide a reasoned argument for an all-age Academy:**

Birkenhead High School is (and always has been) an all-through school for girls from the age of three to 19 and this model is a significant reason for its success. The all-through model is essential to realising the vision of the Academy to provide a first-class education for future generations of girls living in the Wirral.

Through an all-through approach, pupils will be given the opportunity to develop in a consistent environment dedicated to excellence. The ethos of the Senior school will be strongly reinforced by the continuation of two forms of entry from the Junior department: girls who are already steeped in and committed to the values of excellence of the school.

The experience of both this school and the wider GDST is that the all-through approach is a key enabler in curriculum continuity and planning, exchange of good practice between phases and excellent delivery in critical areas for pupil attainment and support, such as assessment and reporting.

The all-age Academy offers genuinely exciting opportunities for innovation and the delivery of excellence within the school. For pupils this will enable the further development of cross-age mentoring and shared learning, as well as providing superb role-modelling for the younger pupils, through the involvement of senior pupils as mentors, in pastoral care (through peer-counselling schemes) and through activities which support learning and achievement, such as 'study buddies' or reading coaches.

The model will also provide opportunities for older pupils to take on leadership roles, for example through the Community Sports Leader Awards and in organising co-curricular activities.

In terms of practice we strongly believe the evidence that successful transition between ages and stages is best supported by careful liaison informed by an understanding of the cross-phase process and expectations which build upon the progress made in the primary stage.

Secondary trained staff also benefit greatly from professional learning with primary colleagues, for example in individualising learning, in more effectively using formative assessment, or in developing new approaches to fostering creativity and in the more flexible approach to curriculum design which is increasingly being considered for KS3 to maintain learning and attainment

For staff the all-through environment also gives opportunities for greater cross-phase understanding and for joint INSET training reinforced through the GDST's new MSc in Educational Leadership.

For pupils who are identified as gifted and talented further support can be offered through use of specialists from the secondary stage, who would not otherwise be available, to provide extension and enrichment activities and qualified subject specialist teaching where appropriate, and to share in planning for transition.

**If the Academy proposes to cater for nursery pupils (age 3-5), please provide details of how this will fit with the Local Authority strategic plan for nursery education:**

There is universal nursery provision for all three and four year olds in the Wirral area. The Birkenhead High School nursery provision, which will continue into the Academy, is included within this mix of council maintained, private, voluntary and independent sector provision.

The nursery phase of the school is vital to the all-through ethos of the school and is an integral part of the school – again following the highly successful existing model of an all-through 3-19 school at Birkenhead High school currently and across the GDST.

### **3.3 Opening Dates\***

September 2009 in existing buildings (if applicable)

September 2010-2012 – provisional – in new/refurbished buildings

### **3.4 Specialism(s) \***

The Academy will specialise in: **Music and Maths**

### **3.5 Admissions\***

Please confirm that the Academy's admissions policy will comply with admissions law, the School Admissions Code of Practice and the School Admission Appeals Code of Practice as they apply to maintained schools.	Mark if agree	√
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Please confirm that the Academy will have regard to and have an independent appeal panel which acts in accordance with the Secretary of State's guidance on exclusions.	Mark if agree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Please confirm that the admissions policy will ensure that the Academy meets the statutory requirements (i.e. "provides education for pupils of different abilities who are wholly or mainly drawn from the area in which the school is situated").	Mark if agree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Comment [h23]: What does "area" mean?

The Academy will take up its place on the local Admissions Forum.	Mark if agree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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If oversubscribed will the Academy select up to 10% of its pupils by aptitude for the specialism?*	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	No	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comment [h24]: Only if oversubscribed?

**If yes, please provide details of how the sponsor will develop a selection mechanism that is not dependent on ability:**

An appropriate test to assess pupils by aptitude for the Academy's music specialism – covering pitch, rhythm, texture, and melody, based on tests used in other schools – will be developed during feasibility.

**Please provide any further details known about the proposed over-subscription criteria and admissions policy. In particular, how the policy will lead to a balanced intake and whether fair banding will be considered\*:**

Further details of the admissions policy and oversubscription criteria, for each relevant age group, will be developed during feasibility, in consultation with the local authority.

The Academy's sponsor proposes to maintain the predecessor school's current broad catchment area which covers the whole of the Wirral peninsula, for each relevant age group, and to increase the size of the school (broadly in line with previous size) on a phased basis to limit the impact on neighbouring schools.

Academy students will therefore be recruited into Reception (Foundation 2), Year 7 and Sixth Form one year at a time from the Academy's opening in September 2009 to ensure the school grows gradually and minimise any impact on surrounding schools.

For Nursery and Reception admissions will also be drawn from the Wirral-wide catchment area, reflecting the broad geographical community the school currently serves.

- o Where the Nursery is oversubscribed, priority will be given to looked-after children and siblings, with remaining places offered by random allocation from all those applying to the school from the Wirral-wide catchment area.
- o Where the Reception is over-subscribed, priority will be given to looked-after children, children at the Academy's nursery, and siblings, with remaining places offered by random allocation from all those applying to the school from the catchment area.

In Year 7, in addition to the Academy's Year 6 pupil progressions, places will be allocated on the basis of 10% of places selected for aptitude for music. Thereafter the Academy will consider siblings and then fair banding of applications from across a comparable geographic community, with priority given to looked after children. Fair banding will follow the same protocols as used for the sister Belvedere Academy and the William Hulme Academy but with a Wirral-wide catchment area. As per The Belvedere Academy the banding used will be Norm Referenced Banding achieving an intake representative of the ability profile of those children applying to a school.

Comment [h25]: If oversubscribed?

Comment [h26]: Not the whole Wirral ability profile?

**Year 12 (Sixth Form)** admission will be in accordance with the Academy's minimum entry requirements.

Religious affiliation will not form any part of the selection criteria at any stage of the school.

By definition, given that the school is an all-through school, all current pupils at the school from 3-19 will have protected places. The Academy cohorts will be phased in from the Reception, Year 7 and Year 12 on a year by year basis, with no infilling to the existing year groups.

### 3.6 Special Educational Needs (SEN)\*

Please confirm that the proposed Academy's SEN policy will meet the requirements of the SEN Code of Practice.	
Mark if agree	√

**Please provide details of the proposed Academy's provision for pupils with SEN, including any specific SEN Units:**

The Academy will develop effective provision for children with SEN, working with the local authority to meet the requirements of the SEN Code of Practice. The Academy will have first class SEN provision, based on the principle of inclusion. The predecessor school is already implementing its access plan and all new facilities and necessary refurbishments will be designed with disabilities in mind. The Academy will use innovative techniques for tackling learning difficulties and will have a particular focus on all aspects of

numeracy. The Academy will also provide a very strong educational offering for children under its gifted and talented programme.

If proposing to include an SEN Unit please confirm that it will form part of the Local-Authority wide provision for SEN and that the Local Authority will bear all costs (capital and revenue) of this provision.	N/A	
Mark if agree		

Comment [h27]: EBD?

### 3.7 Vision\*

#### The Sponsor

The Academy will be sponsored principally by the GDST. Founded in 1872, the GDST is the largest group of independent schools in the UK, and currently educates over 20,000 students aged 3 to 19 in 29 schools. As a charity it reinvests all income in its schools for the benefit of its pupils. It has a reputation for pioneering innovation in the education and care of pupils and is recognised at home and abroad for educational excellence. The GDST is also the sponsor of The Belvedere Academy in Liverpool.

The GDST is currently in discussion with a Russell Group University to be a co-sponsor of the Academy. The proposed University sponsor would bring both an aspirational link for the school in terms of educational excellence and a strong international dimension to the Academy.

#### Vision

The Birkenhead High School Academy will offer a distinctive educational experience to all pupils with a culture of high expectation.

Key themes of the educational vision for the Academy will be:

- **A distinctive ethos built on a culture of high expectations, raising aspirations and the achievement of each pupil's personal best.** This will be built on the success and ethos of the predecessor school – based on principles of access and inclusion and a commitment to add value to pupils with a range of talents which have been the mainstay of both Birkenhead High School's and the GDST's philosophy since their foundation.
- **Raising aspirations and standards through the all-through school model.** In an all-through school girls are given the opportunity to develop in a consistent environment dedicated to excellence from the youngest age. The ethos of the Senior school is strongly reinforced by its cohort from the Junior department of girls who are already steeped in, and committed to, the values of excellence of the school.

- **Working with the local community and in partnership with local schools**, already a major element in the wider educational work of the GDST and its schools. The GDST envisages delivering this through its wrap around care provision, extensive and diverse extra curricular clubs programme, community service, Young Enterprise and Duke of Edinburgh Award schemes, gifted and talented and honours programmes, and master classes.
- **Personal best.** The Academy will aim to help each pupil attain their personal best. The aim is to enable every student to fulfil every aspect of their potential, academically, personally and socially. Personal, individual targets will be set to stretch and challenge students, to reinforce strengths and address weaknesses through independent learning and personal learning plans for every student.
- **Excellence.** The Academy is committed to maintaining excellence in teaching and learning. The aim is to imbue each year group with values and aspirations of excellence, and communicate the highest standards and expectations. Teachers will be provided with all necessary support to be able to 'deliver' excellence in and out of the classroom.
- **Personal development.** A key aspect of the Academy will be the importance of the personal development of each young person enrolled at the Academy. The GDST is committed to fostering a lively spirit of enquiry and to developing individuals who are confident, competent and compassionate, responsive to their environment and to the concerns and needs of others. Within a safe and supportive environment, pupils will be encouraged to take risks and to challenge themselves. This is already an important part of the culture of the predecessor school, with BHS active in Young Enterprise and holding the prestigious Duke of Edinburgh's Award. More than 2,000 DoE awards have been presented to BHS students and the school award, one of only a handful made each year, marks the school's exceptional commitment to the scheme and, more broadly, to developing wider social responsibility.
- **Enrichment and enhancement.** The pupils and staff will have access to the full range of enrichment that other GDST schools currently enjoy. The GDST enables pupils to flourish and excel by providing a unique mix of the collaborative climate, quality of experience, individual support and leadership opportunities which excite and extend their talents. Pupils at the Academy will have access to the GDST's own gifted and talented provision to support accelerated learning for talented pupils in each selected subject.

The all-through character of the Academy will be a central element in its ethos and will provide important opportunities for innovation:

**For all pupils** this will enable the further development of cross-age mentoring and shared learning, as well as providing role-modelling for the younger children, through the involvement of senior pupils as mentors, in pastoral care



(through peer-counselling schemes) and through activities which support learning and achievement, such as 'study buddies' or reading coaches and through providing opportunities for students to take on leadership roles, for example through the Sports Leader Awards, in organising co-curricular activities.

**For younger children** who are identified as gifted and talented additional support can be offered through use of subject specialists to provide extension and enrichment activities and flexibility in stage rather than age progression.

**Seamless transition between ages and stages** – supported by careful liaison, informed by an understanding of the cross-phase process and expectations, joint planning and working by primary and secondary staff, and more flexible approaches to curriculum design and delivery, particularly for KS3, to maintain attainment and progression.

#### **The Academy curriculum**

The Academy will continue to draw on best practice from the GDST's 24 all-through schools, the use of educational research to inform teaching and learning and its links with higher education institutions, in its persistent drive for improvement and its commitment to ensure all pupils fulfil their potential.

#### **Nursery/Foundation, Key Stages 1 and 2**

The Academy's Early Years provision will embed the notion of the 'thinking community', where each child's independent spirit, thought and individual ways of looking at the world will be nurtured and shared, and where learning is fun, engaging and interactive- promoting creativity and innovation- for example using philosophy lessons at Key Stage 2 to develop thinking skills or the outdoor environment as an integral part of learning in the Foundation Stage.

Pupils' social and personal growth will be enhanced by the opportunity from the outset to develop high levels of 'emotional intelligence' and coping skills for life, for example through the inclusion of an internationally researched programme – 'Zippy and his Friends' – for six- to seven-year-olds, enabling them to develop coping strategies in a variety of real-life contexts. This will be in addition to support from their teachers, the involvement of older pupils, 'Friendship Circles', and a positive emphasis on caring and mutual respect which characterises the ethos that the school will continue to promote. As with all GDST schools the Academy will seek to develop competent, confident and compassionate students.

#### **Key Stage 3**

The Academy will broadly follow the National Curriculum as is already the case at GDST schools, as it is in the interests of pupils to follow a broad and balanced offer, and will take advantage of the greater flexibility that now underpins the National Curriculum in order to use it creatively. The GDST is also open to potentially using the thematic approach which KS3 now encourages at the Academy (as for all GDST schools).

### **The 14-19 Curriculum**

The Academy's sponsor and the predecessor school are committed to delivering an exciting, rigorous and varied curriculum which inspires pupils with a love of learning, challenges and extends them intellectually and personally and enables them to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes they need to succeed in education, work and life.

Alongside the current broad and deep offer at GDST schools of GCSEs and A Levels, the GDST has strongly welcomed the thinking behind the 14-19 developments associated with the Tomlinson report and has also been actively investigating diploma-style provision. In keeping with its commitment to maintaining high standards and broadening choice, the Academy will wish to consider the contribution of those Diploma pathways, such as Science, which complement and extend its strengths and specialisms. The Academy would expect to co-operate with other providers in entitlement of 14-19 delivery (eg in opening up the specialism of Further Maths).

The proposed links with an HE provider will also give opportunities for enrichment, stretch and challenge for the 14-19 phase – for example, provision of HE modules in the Sixth Form and opportunities for students to attend masterclasses and seminars. For staff the link also has the potential to offer subject expertise through CPD links.

### **The international dimension**

Pupils entering the Academy in September 2009 will not retire until 2070 – for them the global workplace will be the only reality they know. In order to prepare pupils for life and work in the global economy an international dimension will underpin all aspects of the academy's curriculum and activities, linking with both the GDST's extensive international programmes and, it is hoped, with the international work of the proposed University co-sponsor. This will be based on:

- Access to the international focus and dimension brought by its sponsor the GDST, such as its exchange programme for Heads with China, and its work in developing international schools in India and China;
- Links with other schools and universities, such as the student Summer School, taking place at Ningbo in 2008, and a student exchange programme with the University of Mumbai;
- Close links with universities to further develop international opportunities for staff and students;
- Support to the staff at the Academy in accessing the width of expertise across the GDST from staff who are working on the international dimension within GDST schools – via for example, the GDST's collaborative forums in this area through its ICT network.

An extensive and innovative programme of careers support and guidance will be provided through the GDST, utilising the sponsor's extensive network of former pupils. This comprises an online careers directory of professions, a network of ex-pupils able to offer advice and support, help sourcing work experience and gap year placements, a comprehensive programme of CareerStart workshops, interactive life-skills workshops, the involvement of

world class trainers, and a rough guide to university.

**Specialisms – delivering excellence and innovation in education through the music and maths specialisms.**

Music and maths, and the cross-curricular links between music and maths, are areas of particular strength for both the sponsor, GDST, and the predecessor school. The GDST envisages significant cross-GDST and cross-authority engagement and outreach work to extend this programme at the Academy and spread best practice more widely, especially at 16-19 in the teaching of music and maths. Through its specialisms the academy will:

**Music specialism**

- Encourage students to develop a lifelong passion for, and appreciation of music, not only as composers and performers but also as audiences, technicians and critics.
- Encourage all students to participate in a wide variety of music making, allowing pupils to follow courses at their own pace, utilising the passion and skills of older students to excite and engage the Academy's nursery and primary aged pupils and new pupils admitted to the Academy at 11 years of age.
- Identify ways in which music can improve learning in other curriculum areas – for example combining music and maths – and will take a lead in the imaginative use of new technologies as a means of enhancing learning in music.
- Provide a varying and continuing programme of music performance and extra-curricular music activities. The breadth of the GDST also may offer the potential for collaboration with other schools in music, and potentially links with specialist music schools such as Chetham's, Royal Northern or Purcell, and also with local, regional, national and international music based industries, to enable pupils to work in school with professionals involved in music and to enjoy musical experiences outside the classroom.
- Place high status on a range of courses in music across the width of classical music, music technology, recording and mixing. The Academy will also maximise opportunities for its own pupils and pupils from other local schools and young people in the wider community to achieve in music and gain access to employment, further training and higher education in the growing range of professions and occupations within this and related sectors.
- Contribute to the Music Manifesto and support the delivery of wider opportunities for primary aged pupils in the Academy and in other primary schools to learn a musical instrument.

**Mathematics specialism**

The Academy's sponsor and the predecessor school recognise that maths skills will be ever more important in the 21st century, both in their own right

and to support other disciplines such as science, ICT and business. Maths is a great strength of both Birkenhead High School and the GDST, with high numbers of girls taking Maths and Further Maths at A Level.

Building on BHS's current high performance in maths the Academy will:

- Further enhance the visible mathematics ethos in which maths permeates all aspects of the life of the Academy, provide extensive enrichment activities, utilising the application of ICT and technological resources to develop understanding of mathematical concepts, take part in national initiatives and competitions, international Olympiads, and extend the range of maths courses at all key stages.
- Continually seek to raise the quality of teaching and learning in maths and develop innovative opportunities to teach and learn maths.
- Act as a lead centre in developing and sharing good practice and resources across the whole community in maths.
- Actively engage and work with business, industry and higher education to promote the use of mathematics outside of the Academy.

The Academy's specialisms will permeate all aspects of the curriculum and support the school's all-through ethos, for example with Sixth Form mathematicians working with primary aged pupils during maths weeks, combining a number of music and maths lessons in the early years in line with research evidence that suggests that the way the brain interprets music, pattern and relationships is similar and that correlation to pattern is linked to how children read, and in the sharing of musical cultures to enhance pupils' knowledge and understanding of others and benefit from the richness of diversity in a meaningful and practical way.

The Academy's music and maths specialisms will strengthen the opportunities open to pupils and complement the range of specialisms both in Birkenhead and more widely across the Wirral.

#### **Information and communication technology (ICT)**

The Academy will capitalise on its technology rich learning environment to meet the needs of all learners, develop innovative learning materials and activities across its wide age range, enhance personalised learning and assessment, provide access for pupils and staff to the widest possible range of learning opportunities and specialist provision, support student and teacher contact with other schools and colleges, and enable parents and carers to monitor and support their children's learning.

In the ICT context, the school will be part of the GDST-wide ICT community which provides leading-edge support to GDST schools, staff and pupils (the ICT teacher at Birkenhead High School, for example, currently delivers training at Liverpool John Moores University) including the delivery of an innovative educational network, called MyPlace, which provides a vehicle through which staff and students can communicate, collaborate and share, developing an active learning community.

The Academy's aim will be to ensure that using ICT in innovative and

imaginative ways becomes second nature for all students and staff. The Academy will seek to collaborate with local primary and other secondary schools across the Wirral with a view to making technology-based specialist resources available to a wider group of students.

### **Extended schools**

The Academy will work with the local community to provide access to a range of extended services to meet the needs of its evolving pupil population and its local community, continuing and enhancing what is already a major element of the school's work. It is envisaged this will include:

- Wrap around care provision (breakfast club and after-school club) from 8am until 6pm.
- An extensive and diverse extra-curricular clubs programme during and after the school day.
- Community service, Young Enterprise and Duke of Edinburgh Award schemes.
- Gifted and talented and honours programmes, and master classes for 14-19 students.

This will follow models already existing in other GDST schools – for example at Blackheath High School where the innovative Open Door programme brings adult learners into the school.

### **Pastoral care and support**

A detailed programme of pastoral support, a strong feature of the GDST, will be available for every pupil – with named tutors for all students and clear structures. An in-depth understanding of pupils will be intrinsic to the nature of the Academy (and is frequently highlighted as a strength of GDST schools at inspection). A high degree of interaction between older and younger pupils will also contribute to the supportive environment.

In addition to arrangements for the academic development of students, appropriate emphasis will be placed on structures for high-quality care, guidance and support of students, a strong feature of the GDST. The formal curriculum will be complemented with a full programme of careers education and guidance, pastoral care, professional mentoring and personal, health and citizenship education, and activities to promote students' general well being, and encourage students and their parents to participate fully in the life of the school.

### **Management, leadership, and governance**

#### **Professional development**

A rigorous programme of review and self evaluation will inform the Academy's planning and development. The GDST has operated an extensive staff development programme for more than a decade, achieving notable success in 'growing its own leaders', and has recently introduced an innovative MSc in Educational Leadership, developed in partnership with the University of Leicester and HTI. The Academy will build on this foundation, maximising opportunities to engage high-quality specialists in all curriculum areas, enhancing cross-phase collaboration and development, and ensuring that all

