



Bringing co-operative values to education

© School.coop & The Co-operative College

CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS MOMENTUM BUILDING BEHIND CO-OPERATIVE SCHOOLS

A special conference held in Manchester highlighted the momentum that is building behind the concept of co-operative trusts schools and the first steps towards a national network.

The conference, at The Co-operative's head office on 30 September, attracted over 100 participants from more than 40 schools from across the country that are considering adopting co-operative trust status. The event clearly hit the right note with comments such as:

"The opening session was fantastic, the passion from the speakers was wonderful and the session clearly brought to light that values do make a difference!"

"A really good day, I've got many discussion points to take back to my staff and governors"

"I really enjoyed the opening session, it provided me with an excellent understanding"

"A great conference and I would very much like to attend future events – I'll bring my governors next time!"

"I hope this is a successful approach, today provided me with loads of practical information that I'll be taking back with me"

"This is a very new and exciting idea, events like this are extremely useful"

The event followed the announcement, last month, that Schools Secretary Ed Balls wants to see the multi stakeholder co-operative school model, in which parents, teachers and communities together with organisational partners have direct power over the running of local schools rolled out to others.

The Department for Children Schools and Families is making £500,000 available for a pilot of up to 100 Trusts with co-operative governance models over the next two years, so that those with an involvement in schools have a say in how it is run.

At the conference delegates heard inputs from on the impact that co-operative values were making in schools. Phil Arnold, Director of College Improvement at Reddish Vale Technology College, the UK's first co-operative trust school, which developed its structure in conjunction with the Co-operative Group and Co-operative College, stated; "the co-operative trust will give us a stable platform on which to build partnerships and continue to develop to meet the changing needs of our local communities - Having developed the co-operative model we are only too happy to share our expertise with others."

.

Russell Gill, Head of Membership, at The Co-operative, said: "The conference was the first step towards establishing a national network of co-operative trust schools where we can all share our experiences and develop best practice.





Bringing co-operative values to education

© School.coop & The Co-operative College

“We firmly believe that the co-operative structure allows all stakeholders greater participation in the running of the school and our values, that date back more than 150 years, can help develop an ethos which will lead to higher standards, aspirations and achievements.”

Co-operative College Principal Mervyn Wilson said: “Education is one of the founding principles of the Co-operative Movement and, whilst the idea of democratically running schools as co-operatives may be relatively new in the UK, they are widespread in many parts of Europe.

“We know, from the experience of working with Reddish Vale, the impact that co-operative values can make and believe they will have a similar impact on the expectations and achievements of other schools that adopt the co-operative model”.

Two further co-operative trusts are expected to complete the legal processes by the end of the year with most of the schools present in the early stages of becoming trusts.