



Prospectus

RSA Academy

Transforming learning, transforming lives



Welcome from the Principal

As Principal, I am delighted to welcome you to the RSA Academy. We are a unique and innovative Academy committed to being a centre of excellence for our local community but with a significant reputation for outstanding practice regionally, nationally and internationally.

Our teaching and learning methods are attracting huge interest from around the world and are delivering first class examination outcomes for all our students at GCSE and Post 16. This is something that we value highly in ensuring that every student who attends the Academy is equipped with the competences, skills and knowledge, and academic success necessary for higher education, employment and making a very positive contribution to society.

The RSA Academy won 2 of the prestigious Independent Academies Association awards this year - for Financial Best Practice and the Honorary President's Award for Outstanding Academy Transformation.

Our range of partnerships with leading businesses, universities and the RSA Fellowship means that all our students have access to opportunities which are not available anywhere else. This is part of our uniqueness and one which ensures that we raise the aspirations of all our students. Our Opening Minds curriculum challenges and prepares students to better understand and learn. Students have access to the latest hi-tech environments to develop their competences and skills and prepare for an ever-changing world.

The range of qualification pathways, including the highly prestigious International Baccalaureate, ensures that students are best prepared for adult life.

So, is the RSA Academy the right choice for you and your child? We believe so.

As an independent school, our expectations are very high – attendance, behaviour, uniform and attitudes to learning should be excellent. We will demand the very best from your child and they will need to be prepared to fully embrace our ethos and be a true ambassador for the RSA Academy. In return, we offer the highest quality teaching and learning experiences from very committed and highly skilled staff all within a new, purpose-built environment which is second to none.

The Academy provides a safe, secure and highly enjoyable environment – your child will be cared for, their self confidence nurtured and mutual respect developed. Our Academy environment is designed to ensure that students are motivated and enthused in their learning and, as a result, should make the most of the opportunities provided for them. Disrupting other students from learning or bullying in any form is not acceptable and will not be tolerated.

I firmly believe that the partnership created between parents, students and our staff is the key to successful, enjoyable and highly valued education. If this matches your expectations of secondary education for your child, then I look forward to meeting you.

Michael Gernon
Principal

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I am delighted that the RSA has sponsored an Academy and am equally delighted to be its Chair of Governors.
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The RSA is an impressive organisation with over 28,000 members, people of influence who have achieved excellence within their own fields of expertise, ranging from architects to engineers, accountants to university Vice Chancellors, and from actors to politicians. The Academy works closely with the RSA and its members, many of whom welcome the opportunity to get directly involved with the Academy.

The Academy is hugely important because it is a physical and long lasting symbol of the RSA's commitment to education and to the people of Tipton. The RSA sponsorship of the Academy is designed to help and support the local community and ensure that every young person is equipped with the knowledge and skills they will need to make a success of their lives.

The Governors wish to ensure that the Academy meets the needs of all students and families. It is vitally important to us that we know and understand your views and opinions and for this reason the Parent Council and Student Parliament are vital links to the Governing Body.

The Governors are firmly committed to making sure that the Academy is a first class learning institution.

There have been many important developments since the RSA Academy opened in 2008. There has been tremendous improvement in our GCSE results; we have successfully introduced the International Baccalaureate (IB) - one of very few schools in the West Midlands to offer this prestigious qualification; and we complement the IB with the new IBCC (the International Baccalaureate Career related Certificate). And I am delighted that increasing numbers of our students are choosing to continue their education at university.

The Opening Minds curriculum is proving successful and the Academy has welcomed many visitors from home and abroad to see for themselves what we are offering. The range of activities available is extensive, our drama and music productions have attracted great reviews and many students have experienced extended visits to venues both in the UK and abroad.

I was delighted to read a comment from one of our parents which is quoted in our Ofsted report: *'I feel that the teaching at this school is not just about education. It is about values, beliefs and the future'*. I couldn't have put it better myself. Each one of our students deserves every chance to develop their talents and abilities to achieve as highly as possible. That is the goal of the Academy. Key to this is our staff, students and their parents and here we have the best. The future for the Academy is truly bright.

Professor Barry Carpenter OBE
Chair of Governors



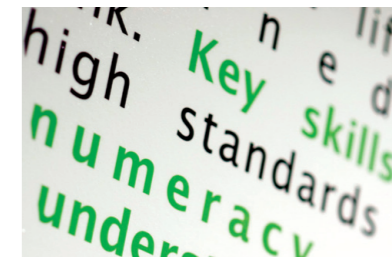
**Welcome
from the
Chair of
Governors**



About the RSA Academy

The RSA Academy is sponsored by the RSA (the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce) which is an independent charity founded in 1754. It is the only one to have been planned around the RSA's Opening Minds curriculum framework. This framework uses competences as the building blocks of the curriculum which means that students at the Academy develop vital competences that are much in demand by employers and by further and higher education. Students learn how to work in teams, how to manage their own time and how to work

to deadlines, how to handle difficult situations and above all, they learn more about themselves as individuals and as learners. They develop the skills of learning so that when they go on to further and higher education they will be well equipped to cope with the challenges they will face – including living and learning alongside people from different backgrounds, being responsible for themselves and understanding what being a good citizen means.



The Academy offers a unique combination of experiences including:

- Different ways of teaching and learning through our Opening Minds curriculum
- A longer day, longer learning sessions and extra opportunities for every student
- Support, care and guidance with every student having their own personal tutor
- Students taking exams when they are ready and not when their age dictates
- An extensive range of qualifications is offered at KS4 including a wide selection of GCSEs, Diplomas and BTECs
- Post 16 teaching offering a wide range of qualifications including the IB Diploma, IBCC and specialised Level 3 vocational courses all providing progression to university, college or employment
- A modified academic year – 5 terms with two week holidays at the end of each and a four week summer holiday
- Five reports a year for parents to monitor the progress of their child
- A residential experience for every student
- A smart uniform with all students required to wear blazers and ties
- Open for the community every evening and weekend to use the most up-to-date resources and facilities

Transforming learning, transforming lives

The RSA Academy will be a centre of excellence. Our aim is to provide the highest quality education for all our students, raise their aspirations and attainment and build on their individual needs, talents and abilities. Our vision is innovative and far-reaching – we have established links with a number of education partners both at home and abroad for the benefit of all our students. We want all our students to experience a rich and varied curriculum which fully prepares them for life within the 21st century.

The Academy's recent Ofsted judgement: *'This is a good school. Care, guidance and support are outstanding and so is the leadership and governance of the Academy. Achievement and the extent to which students enjoy their learning are good. Standards are rising rapidly. Students make good progress. The Academy's capacity for continued improvement is outstanding.'*

The Academy focuses on:

- Providing a safe, supportive and caring environment for students
- Nurturing tolerance, understanding and respect for all members of the Academy community
- Developing greater self-belief, responsibility and confidence in all our students
- Raising aspirations, attainment and motivation through a positive work ethic and stimulating environment
- Promoting very high expectations of behaviour, attendance, uniform and attitudes to learning

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What is Opening Minds?

Our approach to teaching and learning at the RSA Academy is unique and is based on our Opening Minds curriculum – a set of competences which challenge students in their ability to think, to learn, to manage people, information and situations, all of which will lead them towards being good citizens who are capable of influencing and changing the world in which they will live. Our curriculum is designed to meet the individual needs of all students, build on their strengths, improve their areas of development and ensure that they graduate from the Academy with the highest levels of qualifications possible.

In addition to our Opening Minds curriculum, all students will access a number of qualification pathways which will provide success and progression through the 13-19 age range. A key feature of our approach is that students will be able to take their exams when they are ready rather than by age.

What will students be learning?

Teaching in Key Stage 3, Years 7 and 8, is based around exciting, motivating and challenging themed experiences which cross all subject areas and cover all the Opening Minds competences. Through this approach, all students will also study English, Maths, Science and ICT.

From Opening Minds in Key Stage 3, Year 9 students move into their personalised programmes for Key Stage 4. The RSA Academy offers a number of pathways specifically designed to suit the needs of all of our students. We offer an extensive range of subjects at GCSE level including English, Maths, the Sciences, Humanities, Languages and Arts.



We also offer a number of BTEC courses including Science, Performing Arts, Hospitality, Sport and Engineering. Each student receives one-to-one guidance on what is the appropriate programme for them in Key Stage 4. Students may study all their subjects at GCSE level or they may opt for a mixture of GCSE and BTECs. Students take their examinations when they are ready. Some students will sit some of their examinations at the end of Year 10 whilst taking three years for other subjects. This flexibility means that students may have the opportunity to undertake a concentrated period of study in one or two further subjects in



Year 11, completing the whole course in one year, thereby maximising the potential number of GCSEs they can achieve.

We expect all students to gain at least 5 A-C grades (GCSE/BTEC or equivalent) which will enable them to access the high quality Post -16 provision on offer at the Academy. The broad range of subjects available at Key Stage 4 has been carefully compiled to facilitate students' smooth progression into Key Stage 5 areas of study.*

Enrichment

Students learn in many ways and our role is to ensure that they experience a wide range of activities both within and beyond the classroom which extends their learning into new areas. Within the Academy all students access our Enrichment Programme which takes place during the day and offers everyone the opportunity to follow interests in sports, arts, science, technology and outdoor activities. This is a central part of our approach to the curriculum and provides enhancement and enrichment for everyone within the Academy.

In addition we also provide every student with a residential experience during their time at the Academy and encourage all students to participate in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme.

Does the Academy have any specialisms?

The Academy's broad and unique curriculum is underpinned by our dual specialisms of Health and Citizenship.

Ofsted also commented on both of the Academy's specialisms and how integral they have become to the curriculum: *'The students' contribution to the school and wider community is outstanding through the extensive range of opportunities for students to engage in the Academy and the local community such as student leaders and in the 'student parliament'. The Academy provides outstanding support for a*

healthy lifestyle: a wide range of meals is available and all students receive a free, nutritious breakfast daily.'

The RSA Academy was recently awarded the Leading Parent Partnership Award in recognition of its work with students' parents.

The Assessor commented on the large number of innovative and engaging events organised to help parents support their children's learning together with the effort that tutors make to keep in touch with parents.



Technology

As you would expect the Academy is equipped with the latest technology to support high quality teaching and learning. Each of our new classrooms provides students with immediate access to research facilities, interactive devices and the latest touch-screen technology. Specialist areas in Media, Music, Art, Technology, Science, Food and ICT will ensure that students are using the latest industry standard technologies to fully prepare them for life in the 21st century.



A Different Learning Environment

A day in the life of Year 7

8.30 AHSL Opening Minds and this term our theme is 'Icons and Images' and exploring competences of cultural diversity, teamwork and communication techniques.

9.30 Breakfast in the ReStAurant with our teacher.

11.50 Mentoring and Guidance with our tutor.

12.20 It's Enrichment today and I'm in Grow Your Own so it's time to get my overalls on!

13.20 It's time for lunch then back to the allotment to pick the lettuces!

15.50 Time to go home – or I might spend 30 minutes in the Learning Resource Centre before I go.



Post 16

Our Post 16 students can achieve some of the world's most prestigious qualifications – the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the International Baccalaureate Career related Certificate (IBCC). The International Baccalaureate Organisation recognised the high quality of our IBCC courses and the Academy is now working with schools across Europe, Africa and the Middle East to help them develop their own IBCC courses under our guidance.

The RSA Academy is the only school in Sandwell, Dudley and Wolverhampton that is authorised to deliver the International Baccalaureate programme. This has already attracted students from overseas to come to the Academy to study as well as drawing students in from areas around the Academy. The International Baccalaureate is a rigorous 2 year academic programme

which covers a wide range of subjects including English, Spanish, French, German, Business, Psychology, History, Geography, Sciences, Maths and the Arts. Students select 6 subjects (making this a very broad based qualification) and must also complete core elements including an extended research project, 150 hours of creativity, action and service together with Theory of Knowledge modules.

The International Baccalaureate Diploma is a passport to higher education both at home and abroad. The world's highest ranking universities welcome the International Baccalaureate's unique characteristics of broad based study to a high level, with many of them now preferring it to traditional A levels.

The RSA Academy is accredited as an International Baccalaureate World School making us a member of an exclusive community of nearly 3000 centres across the world. The full Diploma is equal to 4.5 A levels and

is weighted heavily in terms of UCAS points for university entry.

The International Baccalaureate Career-related Certificate (IBCC) is a post 16 curriculum framework targeted at 'career minded' students. As an alternative pathway to the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP), IBCC merges academic and vocational courses to create a unique 'industry focussed' programme of learning.

To guarantee a first-class learning experience, all of our IBCC courses are designed, delivered and endorsed by industry partners. This level of partnership ensures that all of our courses embed the necessary theory, skills and competences that students will need to be successful when undertaking a university degree or professional qualification.

The Academy also offers a small number of vocational qualifications at Level 3 including Childcare and Hospitality and Catering. These courses provide a pathway to university or to employment.

Partnerships

Our sponsor, the RSA, is our main partner and its membership of 28,000 people including many based in the West Midlands provides us with a rich resource of expertise.

So for example, when our Key Stage 4 Business Studies students need to be put through their paces as part of their final assessment, we are able to call on successful West Midlands based business people to stage a formal Dragons' Den for the day.

The Academy regularly hosts national Opening Minds conferences drawing delegates from across the UK and further afield who are keen to learn more about the competence based teaching and learning which takes place across all Key Stages at the Academy. Our guests always value the opportunity to talk to our students about their learning and of course our students benefit from this interaction with education professionals from outside of the Academy.

The Academy works closely with the multi-national company Caparo. As well as sponsoring an annual lecture and dinner at the Academy, Caparo provides apprenticeships for 12 of the Academy's Post-16 students. These students will blend their academic studies with high quality, on-site, experience at many of the Caparo sites within the UK and the rest of Europe. The students will be mentored by senior Caparo staff and will have a carefully structured programme. In addition to the apprenticeships, Caparo also provides 1 university scholarship for an outstanding Academy student each year.

RSA

THE UNIVERSITY OF
WARWICK

Roland

CAPARO

We work closely with all our local universities but are particularly pleased to have a strong partnership with the University of Warwick.

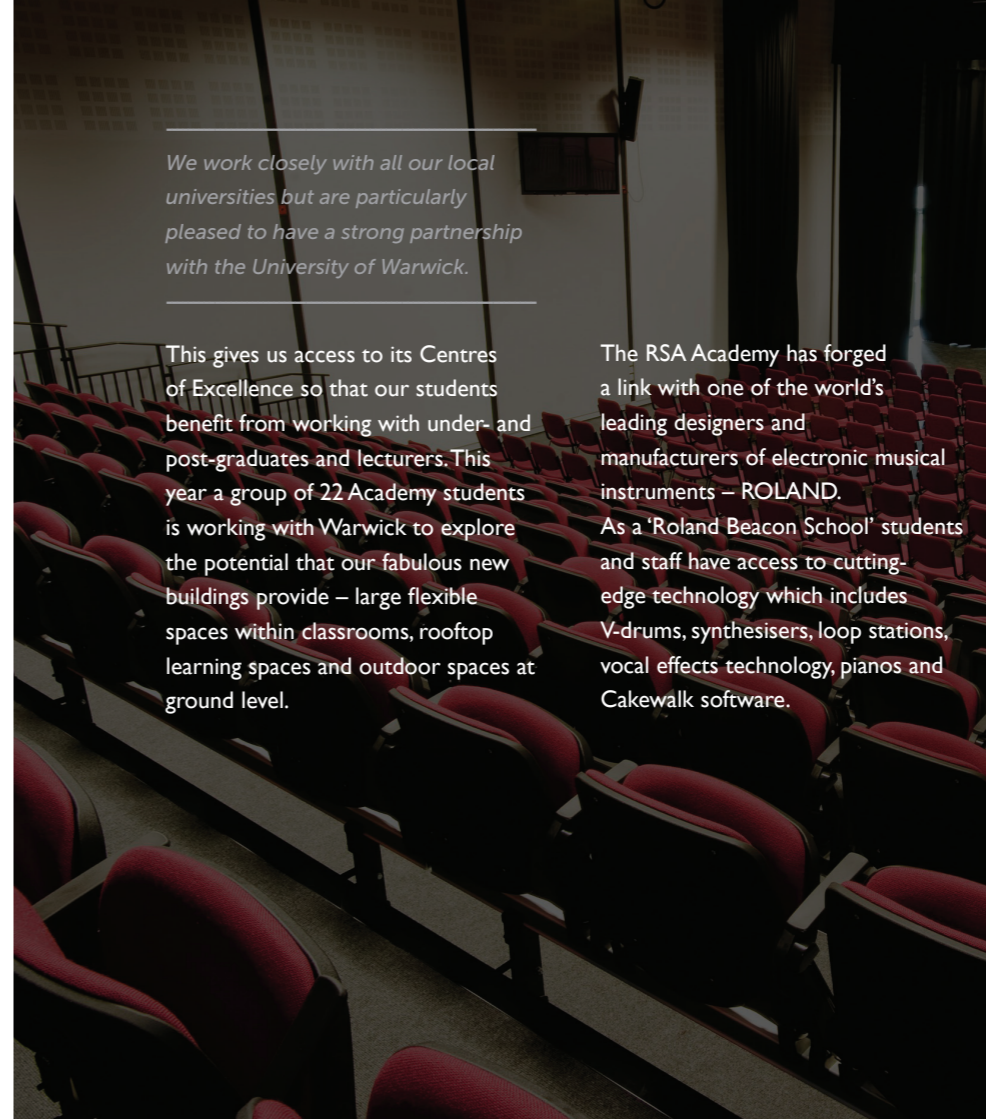
This gives us access to its Centres of Excellence so that our students benefit from working with under- and post-graduates and lecturers. This year a group of 22 Academy students is working with Warwick to explore the potential that our fabulous new buildings provide – large flexible spaces within classrooms, rooftop learning spaces and outdoor spaces at ground level.

The RSA Academy has forged a link with one of the world's leading designers and manufacturers of electronic musical instruments – ROLAND.

As a 'Roland Beacon School' students and staff have access to cutting-edge technology which includes V-drums, synthesisers, loop stations, vocal effects technology, pianos and Cakewalk software.

In addition to Roland's technological support, the company's education department supports the Academy's Opening Minds curriculum. This includes visits from Roland artists, collaborative workshops with the Roland Music Academy at Walsall College, and industry designed assignments for students to complete.

This dynamic approach provides students with a valuable and meaningful insight into the music industry and provides a stunning resource for our Tip Top Productions.





The Academy is immensely proud to be a Comino Centre – the only one based in a school, the other 4 being based in universities.

Our status as a centre means that we are part of a research and development network which focuses on improving teaching and learning. The focus of the work undertaken so far has been on developing the personal competences of the students and giving them access to opportunities and experiences which they would not otherwise have had.

A number of different projects are being run by the Comino Centre within the Academy, including:

- An international partnership with the Herberger Academy, a school in Arizona, USA, giving students from the RSA Academy the opportunity to work

collaboratively on an international level (using Skype and video conferencing) whilst completing research based on global issues. The students are working towards an iGCSE in Global Perspectives

- Developing a student leadership programme to equip students with leadership skills which will enhance their success at the Academy but which will also be valuable at university and in employment
- Tackling social mobility challenges – with the aim of ensuring that all students at the RSA Academy are able to progress and succeed, regardless of their social, racial or economic backgrounds, by raising aspirations, providing skills workshops and consistent, well-informed careers advice
- Enhancing the creativity of the students through links with organisations including the Ideas Foundation.



We moved into our new building in August 2010 and it is rich with ICT. Therefore it is appropriate that our first partnership was with RM (Research Machines) a global hardware and software manufacturer.

This leading technology company provides us with access to the latest equipment, research and emerging new technologies.

The RSA Academy is equipped with excellent state-of-the art ICT facilities. We strive to ensure that we are always at the cutting edge of using the latest technology to enhance both the attainment of our students and provide them with access to the latest developments in hardware and software.



Through our innovative use of ICT we look to develop students' skills and enable them to gain qualifications that will prepare them for the workplace.

Our ICT provision is embedded within all teaching and learning, with audio-visual equipment in each teaching room and specialist suites for Media and Technology (CAD), based across the Academy. We aim to cater for individual learning styles and we make use of the latest technology to help students to take an active part in their own education.

Our learning platform and the interactive whiteboards that are in all teaching rooms enable teachers to create a stimulating environment with all the resources of the Internet available at the touch of a button. Our innovation hub, sponsored by RM Education, allows our students to test and advise the Academy on future ICT integration. Our network ensures that students have a safe and secure environment to work within, whilst allowing them access to a range of Internet and technology resources from the Radio Station through to Video Conferencing.

The Academy has 3 Houses – Romney, Shipley and Adam (all key figures within the development of the RSA). These Houses are headed by highly experienced members of staff who play a key role in the pastoral system within the Academy. Students are placed in small tutor groups of no more than 18 students and they meet with their tutor for 30 minutes each day. Their tutors, plus Heads and Assistant Heads of Houses will guide and mentor students while they are at the Academy, providing the advice and guidance which is so important for young people as they enter and then progress through secondary school. The tutor and House staff are the first port of call for a student (and parent) with something they need to discuss.

Opportunities

Arts, Humanities, Sport and Leisure launched Tip Top Productions so that BTEC Performing Arts students gain first-hand experience of organising and appearing in Academy productions.

Performing Arts is a popular course and one in which our students excel. Anyone who has seen any of the Academy's productions should need little convincing of that! Our students gain their academic qualifications through the experience gained in organising and performing in an annual programme of shows and performances. The curriculum comes to life and becomes entertainment!

Art is offered at GCSE level and within the International Baccalaureate. The RSA Academy Collection is our

annual showcase of our students' work. Students specialising in Art or Photography have the opportunity to work closely with our local galleries as they offer specialised work experience placements and visits for Academy students.

Projects showcasing all the Arts are performed for our local community and visitors either through Tip Top on Tour – performing in our local primary schools for example – or by inviting our community and parents to share in the performance within the Academy – in our Theatre, Dance Studio, our outside amphitheatre or one of our rooftop spaces for example.

A wide variety of sports is played at the Academy including cricket, rugby, football, netball and hockey. Girls' and boys' football teams are making a name for themselves locally and nationally – reaching the quarter-finals of the FA English Schools Competition and the finals of the Sandwell Boys Football Cup.



While working in Languages and Communication our students need no reminding about how important foreign languages are. The Academy's aim is to develop global citizens who are ready to take on the challenges of the 21st century.

Therefore an awareness of different cultures and knowledge of different languages is vital. French and German are taught throughout the Academy with Spanish available as an additional language at GCSE and IB levels. Year 8 students have the opportunity to study Latin for a week. The students gain a Stage One Certificate in Foundation Latin – as well as having a thoroughly good time.

Psychology was introduced as a new GCSE subject in response to the success and popularity of the IB diploma Psychology course. The qualification consists of two units both of which encourage the development of analytical

and critical thinking skills and an appreciation of 'how science works'. The topics studied are relevant to the everyday lives of students and provide a firm foundation for study at Post-16.

Some students need a little bit of additional care and attention. These 'nurture' groups are well looked after at the Academy. One group has been working with a coach from our local Premiership football club, West Bromwich Albion, using sport to help develop the students' confidence and social skills. Throughout the RSA Academy, from its Year 7 students to its Post-16 cohort, students receive outstanding care, guidance and support. Students can enhance their communication skills, become more independent and learn how to be successful by working together by spending the weekend in Outward Bounds accommodation. Academic success is vital but enabling all students to become confident, independent and mature young people is equally important.

Opportunities

Maths, Science and Technology showcases its achievements each year with an Award Celebration evening and this provides students with many opportunities to gain skills which will be valuable to them while they are studying at the Academy and also when they leave.

Hospitality students regularly prepare and serve refreshments for Academy events - ranging from canapés to a 3 course meal! Design and Technology students design and manufacture the awards; students organise and run the exhibitions and also compère the evening. A 360° learning experience!



The Academy has its own Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) coordinator who, with the help of the student STEM Leaders, organises a series of events throughout the year. These range from a 3 day residential for students, to an annual celebration of National Science and Engineering Week. STEM's high profile within the Academy reflects the importance that these subjects have nationally for the country's future economic prosperity.

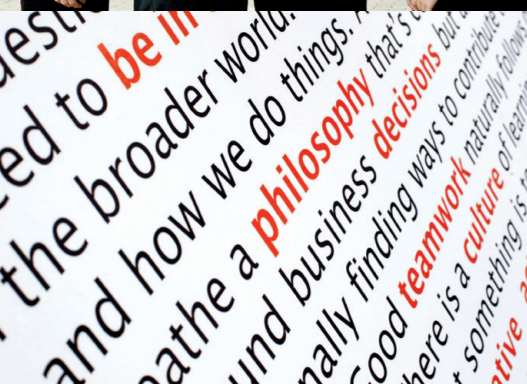


All 3 schools regularly contribute to Academia FM – the Academy's own radio station. This is run by students and programmes are scheduled each week during tutor time.



The RSA's faculty of Royal Designers for Industry (RDI) is an amazing collection of eminent designers representing all design disciplines – product, fashion, graphic, theatre and engineering for example. They too want to get involved and each year we hold a series of masterclasses where an RDI spends an afternoon with students talking about their own career paths and then setting a practical challenge for the students to work on. This gives our students unique exposure to designers who are right at the top of their own careers.





The Academy provides a number of opportunities for students to travel, both within the UK and overseas. We believe that students should have the chance to see at first-hand what life is like for young people of their own age who may live in conditions very different from their own. We have a partner school in South Africa and each year a group of students spends about 10 days there - trekking through one of the national parks and then living with local families and helping at the school – tackling simple building projects or teaching English for example.

The IB holds a world student conference every two years and a number of our senior students attend. This year's was in Segovia, Spain. Our students' time was spent listening to internationally renowned lecturers and then participating in discussions with the other delegates,

who had travelled there from all over the world.

Our Hospitality students spent a week in France learning more about French food. They watched chefs demonstrating their cooking skills and then had the chance to emulate the experts.

And finally, some of our most enthusiastic dance students will spend 10 days in Canada this year, honing their dance skills and living with host families.

The RSA Academy offers a wealth of opportunities!

If you would like your child to be part of this unique Academy, all the admissions and other information that you need is on the inside covers of this booklet.

How do I apply?

The Academy is part of the co-ordinated admissions scheme for Sandwell which requires all parents to complete a preference form. In doing so, the RSA Academy must be listed as one of your preferences on the local authority form.

Those who are offered a place at the RSA Academy will be informed in March through the local authority. Parents who are not offered a place through this process have a right to appeal against the decision. An independent appeals panel has been appointed in accordance with the Code of Practice for Schools Admissions.

What are the criteria?

Students who have the Academy named, and agreed, as part of a statement of special education needs or are in public care.

Admission of pupils whose siblings currently attend the Academy and who will continue to do so on the date of admission.

Admission of pupils on the basis of proximity to the school using straight line measurement from the main entrance of the Academy to the main entrance to the child's home.

NB If the Academy is oversubscribed parents will be offered the opportunity to be placed on a waiting list and should vacancies arise within the academic year, be offered places in accordance with the Code of Practice.

* Please note that permission will not be given to take students out of the Academy during term time.

RSA Academy Governors

Professor Barry Carpenter, OBE
Chair
Former Chair in SEN and Disabilities,
Oxford University and SSAT

Ken Sloan
Registrar, University of Warwick

Philippa Lee
Education Consultant, RM

Louise Thomas
RSA

Richard Harris
Director of the Heart of England
NHS Trust

Lesley James
Director of Business Development
at the RSA Academy

Sir Gerry Acher
Former Board Member and Senior
Partner KPMG and past Chair of
the RSA

Louise Morris
Parent Governor

Professor John Pymm
Dean of Humanities, Sport and
Leisure at Wolverhampton University

Clare Purnell
Staff Governor

Michael Sturge
Former Deputy Chief Executive of
the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and
Treasurer of the University of York

Matthew Taylor
Chief Executive of the RSA

Dr Richard Hutchins
Director, Jaguar Land Rover
Programme

Academy uniform suppliers are:

A Oakes Ltd
30 Churchill Shopping Centre,
Dudley, 01384 255600

Clive Mark
Park Place, Park Street,
Walsall, 01922 622556

Gogna School Wear and Sports
67/69 Rookery Road, Birmingham,
B21 9QU, 0121 523 5572



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Registered Charity, Charity Number 1121595

