

# History of Crown Woods School

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When Crown Woods School opened in 1958, at a cost of £480,000, it was one of the first comprehensive schools in Britain. With more than 2,000 pupils, it was the largest in London. It is located on the edge of inner London and is surrounded to the south and east by Bexley, Bromley and Kent, which still operate grammar schools. The comprehensive therefore struggled somewhat, as the more gifted students were drawn to schools with higher academic achievements in these areas. This drain of local pupils resulted in the need to recruit students from inner city boroughs, who were bused in. Crown Woods suffered from a lack of community focus and loss of talent, and was placed in "special measures" by the DfE in 2000.

As part of the restructuring, Michael Murphy, the current Principal, was appointed in January 2001. He set about rebuilding the academic team and school ethos. By 2001 the school was rapidly improving, and he and his team planned a new school to replace the tired postwar buildings and create an outstanding place of learning. The new buildings opened in 2011, at a cost of £50 million, and the school was renamed Crown Woods College.

Crown Woods is run as four "home" schools – three for 11-16 year-olds and one for post-16 students. Students spend some 75% of their learning time in their home schools, thus benefiting from human scale education in a building housing 450 students. One of the schools is dedicated to the more academic pupils. In addition to the four home schools, the campus has an art, design and craft school, the Symphony Centre offering remedial care to pupils with behavioural and learning difficulties, and a centre for sport and community education, which boasts state-of-the-art facilities and is used out of school hours by the local community.

There are today some 1,600 pupils at Crown Woods. This total will rise to around 1,800 over the next few years, making it again one of the largest schools in Britain. In September 2014 the school was oversubscribed.

It is worth noting that:

- ✔ The school is rated by Ofsted as "Good".
- ✔ In 2014 71% of the students achieved grades A\* to C in their A levels (67 per cent in 2013).
- ✔ In 2014 65% of the students gained five or more subjects in GCSE (including English and Maths) at grades A\* to C (32% in 2011 and 58 per cent in 2013).
- ✔ 46% of the students qualify for free school meals.
- ✔ 29% of the students have special educational needs.
- ✔ 31% of the students have a first language that is not English.
- ✔ 6% of the students have mobility issues.

# Stationers' Crown Woods Academy



The Company's sponsorship of SCWA was formally completed on 1 September, 2014. It is the Company's most significant charitable activity since the opening of the first Stationers' Company School in Bolt Court, Fleet Street, in 1861. The original school, by then located in Hornsey, sadly closed in 1983. The funds generated by the sale of the site formed the initial funding of the Educational Charity, which was subsequently merged with all Company charities in 2007 to form the Stationers' Foundation.

The trustees of the Foundation, strongly supported by the Court and by the Old Stationers' Association, decided in 2010 that the current opportunity presented by the Government's school academy initiative was worth exploring, so that once again we could be involved in a school as part of our charitable offering. An academy is not controlled by a borough or county council but by the governors, who have the freedom – within the DfE's standards of compulsory core subjects – to develop their own curriculum. This will give us the opportunity to develop a specialist curriculum leading to further education and/or careers in our industry. This would fulfil two of our strategic objectives – making the Company more relevant to our trades of the guild and raising the profile of the Stationers' Foundation within the Company.



After an abortive attempt to support a school in Enfield, still to be built, we were introduced to the Leigh Academies Trust. LAT is a highly successful educational charity, formed in 2008 in the Dartford area, to develop outstanding academies. It controls eight academies, educating more than



6,000 students to a very high standard, achieving Ofsted "Good" and "Outstanding" ratings. It is held in high esteem by the DfE, and its founding chief executive has recently been appointed the Department's Commissioner for Schools for England, having been awarded a CBE for services to education.

LAT began a search for a suitable school for us to sponsor between their base in Dartford and the City. After painstaking negotiations, interest finally came in 2013 from Crown Woods College in Eltham. Months of further negotiations followed, and in July 2014 the LAT board and our Court voted to transform the school into an academy.



## TO FUND:

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# The future and our involvement –

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As well as the Stationers' Company, the other founding sponsors are Ravensbourne (a specialist digital media college of further education) and the University of Greenwich.

The Foundation and the Company have undertaken to support the Stationers' Crown Woods Academy in five important ways:

- ✔ **By contributing to its governance by providing four governors and a director of the LAT board.**
- ✔ **By contributing to its specialist curriculum development.**
- ✔ **By providing qualified people and businesses to mentor and offer work experience, industry visits, speakers and exhibitors at career fairs, staff secondments, apprenticeship work placements and internships.**
- ✔ **By providing funds or gifts in kind to support the teaching of the specialist curriculum with equipment and resources not normally funded by the DfE – such as design and publishing software, books supporting the curriculum, plotters, digital colour and 3D printers.**
- ✔ **By providing a fund to ensure that all pupils have equal opportunity to participate in the enhanced activities of the Academy, irrespective of parental ability to pay. An example of this would be to fund students' expenses on work placements.**

We have made a good start. Four members of the Court have volunteered to serve as governors and will shortly begin training, and one of them, Past Master Kevin Dewey, will serve on the LAT Board. A committee is working closely with senior staff to develop the new curriculum, adding subjects such as product and graphic design, photography, computer science, film studies and media.

We are building a data base of people and businesses that can provide the support we need to create the bridge between education and industry. But we need more people still for this role. Part of this appeal is to encourage everyone to offer his or her help and to identify others who can do so also.

We have already recruited the first cohort of mentors, and we have begun our fund for the school with the generous support of a number of people. It is now up to us all to see how we can make SCWA "Outstanding", benefiting the students and our industries. We are offering our industries a chance to work in an academy dedicated to providing motivated and well-educated new entrants to our businesses.

W.H. Auden said: "Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire". Please let us have your match to help get the bonfire going!