

Schools Unite To Form UK's First Schools Co-operative

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More than 100 primary, secondary schools and colleges in England are set to pool resources, expertise and buying power in the first organisation of its kind in the UK – the Schools Co-operative Society (SCS).

The announcement comes at a time when the Government is encouraging greater independence in education as part of major reforms and is designed to help schools help themselves in accordance with co-operative values and principles.

Already registered as a co-operative, the organisation's governing body is now working on a strategy that will include:

- Sharing best practice in terms of teaching and management.
- Advancing the co-operative cause in the field of education.
- Using combined buying power – estimated at £100 million plus - to purchase a range of goods and services including energy, administrative services.



All the schools and colleges involved employ globally shared co-operative values such as self-help, democracy, equality, honesty and social responsibility both in their governance and in the curriculum. They are part of the [Co-operative Schools Programme](#), one of the [community projects](#) which has been run by [The Co-operative](#)

[Group](#), the UK's biggest mutual retailer, and the Co-operative College, the Movement's educational charity, for the last eight years.

Dave Boston, head teacher of Sir Thomas Boughy Co-operative Business and Enterprise College in Newcastle-under-Lyme, has been appointed Chair of the SCS Board.

He explained: "Co-operative values and principles are more relevant than ever at a time when people are being urged to be more independent and less reliant on the state.

"The Government's educational reform programme presents us with an opportunity to promote the Co-operative model, which has a proven track record of success in improving school performance. The SCS will play a crucial part in this as well as using the combined buying muscle of its member schools to get better commercial deals."

Peter Marks, Group Chief Executive of The Co-operative Group, commented: "Our close involvement in, and support for the establishment of the SCS yet again demonstrates the essential difference between The Co-operative which, since its inception more than 150 years ago, has had a clear social purpose, and other retailers, whose ultimate goal is to maximise profits for private shareholders."

Mervyn Wilson, Principal and Chief Executive of the Co-operative College which has worked to develop the network of co-operative schools added: "We strongly believe that the adoption of Co-operative values and principles in the education system will support community cohesion and educational achievement and will produce young people, who are more socially aware and capable of contributing to the wellbeing of local communities."

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