



...realise your potential



## Message from the Principal



Thank you for your interest in Darwen Aldridge Community Academy. I am very pleased to be able to introduce you to what I believe is the most exciting new development in education provision in the borough of Blackburn with Darwen.

The Academy opened on September 1st 2008. It is an independent non fee-paying school jointly funded by our Sponsor, The Aldridge Foundation and the Department for Education.

The main aim of the Academy is to provide the highest quality of education for students in the main school from Year 7 to Year 11 and in the new Sixth Form. In our first three years, we have seen year-on-year improvements in levels of student attainment and have been recognised as one of the most improved Academies in the country. However, the Academy is more than a new type of school. The Academy also offers facilities and learning opportunities for engaging with the wider community, including the local business community.

In September 2010, the Academy relocated to its new facilities in Darwen town centre.

I hope that this prospectus provides you with a taste of what the Academy offers. If you would like to hear more about our plans, we will be holding briefing events for prospective parents and the wider community through the year. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any further questions about the Academy.

Brendan Loughran  
Principal, Darwen Aldridge Community Academy





"...this wonderful, innovative place. The Darwen Aldridge Community Academy is ground-breaking. I am grateful to Brendan Loughran and Rod Aldridge for showing Catherine and me just how unique it is. I am convinced the Academy will transform the lives of families in Darwen and, through its example, countless others elsewhere. "

**HRH Prince William of Wales, April 2011**

## Welcome to our Academy...where everyone is valued.

### Message from Academy Sponsor



I am delighted that you are interested in securing a place for your child at Darwen Aldridge Community Academy. The Academy combines a fresh approach to teaching and learning with first class educational facilities.

I chose to become sponsor because I am fully committed to supporting young people and improving educational achievement and this is reflected in the work of my Foundation. Although Academy sponsors come from a wide range of backgrounds, they all bring a record of success in other fields, which they can apply in partnership with experienced educationalists and school managers. This provides the Academy with a refreshing and innovative approach to management and governance.

For me, the defining feature of an Academy is its specialism, which the sponsor is able to choose. I have chosen to focus on entrepreneurship to inspire students to have the confidence

to take advantage of opportunities and to raise aspirations. Embedding entrepreneurship across all aspects of the curriculum will allow students to naturally progress towards shaping their own futures. This will encourage them to develop a sense of responsibility for all aspects of their lives post school – be that work, sport and the arts, relationships with family or the community. Success for me is about creating a positive environment where every student can realise their true potential.

I will take an active and ongoing interest in the future development of the Academy. Above all it is about benefiting the Darwen community and unlocking the talent of its young people.

Rod Aldridge  
Chairman of the Aldridge Foundation,  
sponsors of the Academy

Our Mission is clear ... to transform education in Darwen

## An entrepreneur goes that extra mile.

Darwen Aldridge Community Academy encourages its students and staff, and members of the local community, to develop a passion for learning as well as an enterprising spirit. In addition, it seeks to create, develop and maintain an education that focuses emphatically on providing opportunities for success for all, recognising and celebrating the achievements of everyone in all aspects of life at the Academy.

It particularly wants young people to recognise the potential that they have, and then to fulfil that potential:

### REALISE YOUR POTENTIAL!

The Darwen Aldridge Community Academy is a Centre of Excellence for entrepreneurial education.

It is an inclusive Academy that provides for the students and citizens of Darwen continuous opportunities, in what is a world-class, high quality environment for lifelong learning. The Academy's students are committed, successful learners, who are proud, creative and self-confident, showing respect for themselves, the community and for others.



In addition, the Academy places considerable value not only on entrepreneurship, but also on sport and healthy living, partnership working, developing strong links with the community, and promoting inclusion and equality of opportunity.

### What our sponsorship brings

Working together with our sponsor, The Aldridge Foundation, the Academy is able to offer a number of exciting and fun packages that can enhance your child's learning experiences. These include:

- Opening Eyes Project – gives Aldridge Academy students the chance to participate in life-changing overseas visits.

- Essentially Dance Project – providing ballroom and Latin American dance in all PE lessons.

We have two partner Aldridge Academies in Brighton, and further Aldridge Academy projects planned in Portland, Dorset, and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

In addition, the Foundation has helped us to broker relationships with a number of national partners. The country's first Entrepreneurship Career Academy is based in our Sixth Form and sees students participating in guru lectures and paid internships. We expect more programmes and partnerships to be developed with the Foundation in the coming years.



## Our Curriculum

The Academy curriculum offers a wide range of learning opportunities in and out of the classroom. Our aim is to provide a truly personalised education experience for every student in the Academy.

Our core business is teaching and learning, encouraging students to develop their key skills of literacy, numeracy and oracy whilst becoming confident and independent learners.

Students in the Academy follow the National Curriculum. They are supported to progress in each subject area at the rate that best suits them. One of our principles is that students take assessments 'when ready', rather than the traditional expectation of students being assessed when the exam system determines. Some of the main differences noticed by students is in how the curriculum is structured, the regular assessment and emphasis on themes of entrepreneurship and sport.

The Academy specialism of Entrepreneurship is taught as a discrete subject and as a theme underpinning every area of the curriculum. In addition to the main specialism and the second

specialism of sport, the following are strong themes in the structure and delivery of the curriculum:

- Numeracy and financial awareness (in particular through ICT and Mathematics)
- Literacy, communication and international themes (in particular through English and modern languages)
- Creativity (in particular through Creative Arts and the Humanities)
- Discovery, Research and Development (in particular through Technology and Science)

In addition to the traditional academic curriculum, there are a range of vocational options available for all students as they progress through the Academy, and an emphasis on promoting participation in extra-curricular activities. Our aim is to provide a truly personalised education for every student in the Academy.

Learning often takes place in longer lessons or learning sessions. It would not be uncommon for a student's timetabled day to consist of just two extended learning sessions.

## Structure of the Academy Day

Session 1 (includes breakfast)	8.45-11.45
Progress tutorial/ assembly	11.45-12.05
Session 2 (includes lunch)	12.05-15.15
Session 3 *	15.15-16.30

\*All students will be encouraged to participate in session three on two occasions per week.

# The Academy curriculum... something for everyone

## Our Curriculum



The timetable is designed with several classes in a subject running at the same time, 'blocked' to enable staff to work creatively with students in terms of how lessons are structured and delivered. Student 'down-time' from moving between lessons is at a minimum, removing any unnecessary distraction away from learning. Longer learning sessions are broken up by a morning break (breakfast) and an afternoon break (lunch) and students have the opportunity and dedicated space for recreational activity at these times. Every student is encouraged to participate in at least two 'session three's' of extra-curricular or enrichment activity.

There is a dedicated Integrated Learning Support base in the Academy which provides a high level of care and support both within the base and in outreach work across the curriculum for those students with additional learning needs.

We operate a cross-curricular programme where we identify and support many Gifted and Talented students who excel in one or more areas of the curriculum.

### Key Stage 3: Years 7 and 8

In Years 7 and 8 students study English, Maths, Science, IT, Humanities, Design Technology, Creative and Performing Arts, French, PE, RE and PSHCE. At the end of Year 8 students make informed choices for their studies at Key Stage 4.

### Key Stage 4: Years 9, 10 and 11

All students study the core subjects of English, Maths, Science, and PE. Students have the choice between GCSE RE or GCSE Citizenship, alongside GCSE General Studies. They may then choose to study from a broad mixture of academic and vocational, accredited and non-accredited one or two year courses, and make additional choices at the end of Years 9 and 10, including the opportunity to begin AS level courses in Year 11 where appropriate.

### Extra Curricular Activities

Our extra - curricular programme gives students a choice of opportunities which complements and extends their education. These range from sporting, musical, performing, cultural and community activities and form an integral part of the timetable.

Field trips, visits and residential visits are planned as a regular feature of the students' education at the Academy.



## Sixth Form



# An entrepreneur is determined to succeed.

The Sixth Form is a large, vibrant community that prides itself on an inclusive and positive approach to personal development. As well as over 30 academic and vocational courses to choose from, there is also a wide variety of enrichment and extra curricular activities with which you can be involved.

We have high expectations of our students and look for prospective students who have good attendance, punctuality and behaviour records and a positive work ethic.

Please do not hesitate to come to speak with us about the Sixth Form. We look forward to meeting you soon.

### Transition: Year 11 into Year 12

We recognise the importance of all students undertaking a programme of study commensurate with their grades at GCSE.

During Year 11 all students have a number of information, advice and guidance opportunities to assist them in making the right choice of course(s) for Sixth Form. This includes taster days, 1:1 meetings with senior staff and an Open Evening. Once students enter the Sixth Form they undertake a detailed induction programme specifically designed to help them start to build strong relationships with their Progress Tutor and each other, as well as develop

a sense of belonging, collegiality, and to promote aspiration. For instance, students will undertake teambuilding and leadership development exercises, agree learning targets and improve their critical thinking and study skills.

In order to support transfer into the Sixth Form at the end of September each year all parents of Year 12 students are invited into the Academy in order to meet with their son/daughter's Progress Tutor, as well as the Head of Sixth Form and Sixth Form Progress Co-ordinator, and discuss how he/she is adapting to life in the Sixth Form.

### Admissions

Students who wish to join Year 12 at the Academy should apply for a place now. We offer a wide range of Level 2 and Level 3 courses.

An application pack and details on the courses on offer are available on the website, or from the Head of Sixth Form. Applications to the Sixth Form will be processed throughout the Academic Year.

### Key Stage 5: Sixth Form

Students choose from a broad range of Level 3 academic and applied courses in addition to other recognised qualifications. Enrichment opportunities such as Duke of Edinburgh Awards, FA Coaching qualifications and Key Skills offer further opportunities for development as students progress through the Sixth Form and on to University, employment or further training.

Making the choice about where to continue your studies after GCSEs is an important decision. We are delighted that the Academy's Sixth Form is one of your options at the moment. We hope the information contained in this prospectus will answer some of your questions and help to inform your decision.

## Entrepreneurship

An entrepreneur identifies what is needed, provides it, and then refuses to accept failure.

As an Academy, we are a Specialist College. This means that we place an emphasis on our main specialisms and use them to continually drive up standards of attainment, to promote positive attitudes to lifelong learning and to use them as a theme through which we engage with our 'Family of Schools' and the wider local and business community.

Our main emphasis is through the unique specialism of entrepreneurship. Through this, we promote an attitude in all who attend the Academy that revolves around a positive approach, a determination to succeed and to achieve the highest standards in any and every area of learning and life.

The Academy develops knowledge, skills and understanding about enterprise activity to support the development of future business and social entrepreneurs.

All students experience entrepreneurship themes delivered across the curriculum, study aspects of entrepreneurship starting in lower school and build and maintain an entrepreneurship portfolio of their experiences, activities and projects undertaken throughout their time in the Academy.

We recognise that there are many aspects to entrepreneurship, but the following framework of six themes is continually emphasised with students in their learning:



**Determination** - being prepared to see a task through to the best of your ability



**Creativity** - continually looking for innovation and original ideas



**Problem solving** - identifying problems in advance and finding the solutions to them



**Risk taking** - calculating risk and evaluating how much risk to take



**Teamwork** - the ability to work with and lead others



**Passion** - putting your heart and soul into something you believe in



Like the existing Business and Enterprise Specialist Colleges, we also place an emphasis on Business Studies and related courses, Numeracy and ICT. However, we also emphasise Literacy, Communication Skills, and an awareness of global issues. We place a particular emphasis on Social Entrepreneurship, for instance creating many opportunities for active citizenship and volunteering as activities where young people take responsibility for the development and well-being of the Academy and their wider communities. We have space designated as an Entrepreneurship Centre in the Academy which is the host for school and community activity, under the brand name of 'DARWENCREATES...'. Ultimately, we hope to have a national profile for the promotion of entrepreneurship in all schools across the country.

The second specialism that has been chosen for the Academy is sport. This combines well with the philosophy and attitude of an entrepreneurial approach in terms of promoting enjoyment, a determination to succeed, high quality individual performance, teamwork and a positive attitude to healthy living.





### **Pastoral Care for students**

In order to ensure the welfare of students and in supporting them to progress academically in the Academy, we recognise that there needs to be in place the highest levels of care and attention.

All teaching staff naturally offer high levels of pastoral care and they all have responsibility as form tutors, offering regular contact and support for students progress through a daily tutor period.

Teaching staff are assisted in their pastoral role by a variety of pastoral support staff and the Academy's Student Services team including Education Welfare Officer(s), Attendance Officer(s), Learning Mentors and a variety of other partner agencies.

We are determined that our young people feel supported, safe and happy in a quality learning environment, enabling them to achieve the highest standards.

### **Parental partnership**

Parents are encouraged to be fully involved in their child's education and the parental partnership with the Academy is central to establishing a successful working relationship. A Home-Academy Agreement outlines the commitment of the Academy to its provision of education for the students and the expectation of support from parents.

The Academy reports regularly to parents on their child's progress and provides regular mail drops and newsletters. Parents are encouraged to contact the Academy immediately

if they have any concerns on any aspect of their child's education and the Academy contacts parents as soon as possible should either a particularly commendable action or difficulty arise.



Highest levels of care

everyone matters



Once their task is done,  
an entrepreneur will seek  
new challenges and  
solve new problems.

## Academy uniform

It is important to us that through the appearance of our students and staff, we send out the strong message that we are proud of our Academy and that we are always ready and equipped to achieve our best. The specialism chosen for the Academy is Entrepreneurship and in many ways our environment, including the new facilities and uniform reflect a business-like approach.

Students were consulted about the sort of uniform that they would like and involved in the design of the uniform. They wanted something distinct that combined elements of traditional uniform with a contemporary business look.

### The uniform for Years 7 to 10 is:

Academy navy blue blazer  
Academy navy blue trousers  
White shirt  
Academy navy blue jade green stripe tie  
Academy navy skirt, navy blue tights or navy blue knee length socks (girls)  
White blouse and Academy jade neckscarf (girls)  
Plain unbranded black shoes  
Academy coat  
Academy ID badge

### The uniform for Year 11 is:

Two-piece black suit with Academy lapel pin-badge  
White shirt  
Year 11 Academy tie  
White blouse and Academy black/silver  
Year 11 neckscarf (girls)  
Plain unbranded black shoes  
Academy coat  
Academy ID badge

### Sports kit (Girls and Boys)

Academy polo shirt  
Academy sports shirt  
Academy shorts (skorts available for girls)  
Academy sports socks  
Football boots/trainers as appropriate

### Optional items

Academy tracksuit trousers and/or top for PE  
DACA branded blue sweater for boys in years 7-10  
DACA branded sweater or cardigan for girls in years 7-10  
**(please note that the blazer is compulsory and the sweater or cardigan may be worn in addition to the blazer but not as a replacement for it).**  
DACA branded Academy scarf  
DACA beanie hat

The dress code for the Sixth Form is smart, appropriate for work and 'ready for interview'.

facilities to be proud of

# Entrepreneurship - a state of mind which strives to solve problems rather than accept defeat.



## A unique design

Our new Academy building opened in September 2010. It has a unique design and has been purpose built for the delivery of the Academy Curriculum.

It is fully equipped with first rate facilities to enable high quality teaching and learning in state of the art general teaching areas and modern specialist facilities for subjects such as PE, Technology, Science and the Creative Arts, all supported by a new ICT framework.

There is an Entrepreneurship Centre as the central focal point in the Academy for use by students to support their learning relating to the main specialism.

This area is also the home for the globally unique Entrepreneurship Bridge where 16-25 year olds have the environment and support to turn business ideas into reality. Sports facilities include a new sports hall, a full size, artificial turf all-weather pitch, a multi use games area, a large dance studio/gym, a drama studio, an aerobics fitness studio and two grass pitches.

All general teaching areas are located by subject in suites, with easy and ample access to ICT to support learning. The new facilities are adaptable to enable some classrooms to be altered in shape and size to accommodate a range of group sizes for different learning activities.

There are large group lecture facilities, private study areas, small group seminar areas and office spaces in all curriculum areas.

Other features of the new building design include a dedicated Sixth Form area, a Vocational Area including an industry standard catering suite, a cafe, a shop and Business, Retail and ICT facilities. The Academy has a large, central assembly hall, a canteen that can accommodate over 300 diners at any one time and recreation space for students during break times.

The Academy has been designed as a barrier free building that enables access for all, to all areas. Corridor spaces have been designed to be wide and bright with ample ramp and lift access to support accessibility through the whole building.



## Meeting the needs of every student

The Academy ensures that support is in place for every student to enable them to realise their academic and personal potential. Our Special Educational Needs department has many qualified and experienced staff who are able to assist students in all areas of their learning and development.

Our Personalised Learning Centre offers provision for young people who require a specifically-tailored curriculum, providing opportunities to get involved in outdoor education and entrepreneurial activities in addition to the core curriculum subjects.

Students who are gifted and talented in any curriculum area will be identified by staff early on in their time at the Academy, and will be given opportunities to stretch themselves, including extra-curricular learning and early entry at GCSE and A Level.



a new stage of education



### Arrangements for the transfer from Primary School

We recognise that it is vital to ensure that every child has a positive experience on the transition to secondary phase and we have a transition team who engage with partner primary schools; students and parents to ensure a smooth transition. During the summer term we meet with Year 6 teachers in all feeder primary schools and discuss academic and pastoral information and this enables us to place your child into appropriate teaching groups and tutor groups. Most subjects are set by ability however tutor groups are mixed ability.

In terms of supporting academic progress, many students will have the opportunity to participate in curriculum-related transition activities bridging the work of their primary school with the offer of the Academy. Every student who is offered a place at the Academy is invited to a Transition Day in the summer term of Year 6 and an individual induction day meeting in September.

The Academy is fully involved with partner primary schools in the MOTHS (Moving On To High School) programme, providing additional support to students as they progress from primary school to the Academy.

Parents of students joining the Academy during Year 7 are also invited to an information evening in advance of their child starting at the Academy and there is a 'Year 7 settling in' parents' evening in the first term.





## Admissions information

### Year 7

If your child is currently in Year 6 of primary school, you should apply for a place in the Academy now. The Academy has its own Admissions Body for admissions to the Academy. Parents are asked to use and follow the guidelines in the Blackburn with Darwen information booklet 'Secondary school admissions'. This booklet gives further detail on the Academy and the process of application.

The Academy is offering places for up to 240 Year 7 students each September. In the case of the Academy receiving more applications than places available, the Blackburn with Darwen 'over-subscription criteria' will be used to determine places, in the same way that the criteria applies to Community Schools.

### Sixth Form

Students who wish to join First Year Sixth at the Academy should apply for a place now. An application pack and details on the courses on offer from are available from the Director of Sixth Form Studies at the Academy.

Applications to the Sixth Form will be processed throughout the Academic Year.

an entrepreneur takes **risks**  
and uses **initiative** to be successful

