
Being part of the RSA
Family of Academies



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WARWICK

RSA
Academies

**Warwick
University and
RSA Academies
Partnership**

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Introduction

Alison Critchley
Chief Executive,
RSA Academies

Christina Hughes
Pro-Vice-Chancellor,
Warwick University

The University of Warwick and RSA Academies have set up a ground-breaking partnership designed to support young people to aspire, attain and achieve their full academic potential. Through a bespoke long-term programme of activities and interventions, our aims are to:

- Increase pupils' knowledge about what a university education involves
- Help pupils to gain the skills, knowledge and experience to gain a place at university
- Increase the number of pupils from RSA Academies who move on to a university education, particularly those from lower income households or those who would be the first in their family to go to university
- Enrich education by involving academics in teaching

Crucially, our programme starts with the youngest secondary pupils, and also includes opportunities for children aged 9–11 from Ipsley CE RSA Academy, as the research evidence indicates how aspiration and attainment from Year 7 to Year 11 plays a key role in the likelihood of a young person going to university. As these pupils progress through secondary school they will then be able to join the University of Warwick programmes for Years 10–13 (ages 14–18). These are intended for pupils who might not otherwise consider applying to university.



The Warwick University and RSA Academies partnership is an integral part of Warwick’s Widening Participation strategy. This has already enabled many young people to become the first person in their family to go to university. The partnership also sits within a wider programme of initiatives across the RSA Family of Academies and with the RSA, designed to help pupils and teachers build connections that prepare them for the world beyond school.

“Many had not seen University as a feasible option for them, or had not even considered it, but this programme definitely altered many perceptions”

Becky Porter, Science Teacher, Whitley Academy

Widening Participation facts and figures

Widening Participation involves removing the barriers to higher education that disadvantaged groups, such as those from low-income families or whose parents have no history of higher education, face. Sutton Trust, an educational charity that aims to improve social mobility, has published various reports showing that:

- Out of 80,000 students on Free School Meals last year, only 45 received a place at Oxbridge
- Four private schools and one elite college sent more students to Oxbridge over three years than 2,000 schools and colleges across the UK
- State school pupils are more likely to get a 2.1 or first class degree at university than their private school counterparts with the same A-levels in similar subjects
- Pupils from the most affluent areas are nearly 10 times more likely to win a place at a leading university than those from the poorest

Starting out ...

In order to plan the programme and evaluate the partnership, RSA Academies ran focus groups in September 2013, before the Widening Participation initiatives had begun. This gauged the opinions and views of students about university and future career prospects. Nine focus groups were held across the academies with an average of five students in each. The students were chosen by their schools to give a diverse range of interests and career plans across the nine groups. Students were asked about their current studies, future intentions including university and career interests and who they talked to about such issues.

The results of the focus groups showed that many students had a clear idea about what they would like to do in the future but lacked knowledge, such as what subjects to take at A-Level, to make these plans a reality. Almost all Year 8 students mentioned adults they talked to about career intentions, showing the importance of good careers advice starting at a young age and the benefit of the Warwick RSA Academies programme beginning at Year 7. Some students discussed the helpfulness of talking to A-Level students to make informed choices and were also attracted to the possibility of talking to university students.

Since then, a number of events and activities have taken place as part of the Warwick RSA Academies programme, allowing students involved to speak to undergraduates, receive lectures from academics and generally become much more well-informed about what it is like to study at university. Find out more about the various trips and activities by reading our case studies.



Angela Saul
Assistant Principal,
Ipsley CE
RSA Academy

Case study 1 – Learning Spaces project

Twelve pupils from across all year groups at Ipsley CE RSA Academy visited the Warwick University campus on 5 June 2014 to take part in a ‘Learning Spaces’ workshop. They visited the campus, had a tour around classrooms and the library before working on how to improve the learning spaces in their own school, particularly the school library. Pupils worked with LEGO to create their ideal library after interviewing students from the university to find out what they liked about their learning spaces.

This was a fantastic opportunity for the children to visit the university and work with university students and staff. After the visit, the pupils fed back their ideas to staff at school. These ideas have helped to shape the redesign of the Ipsley library.

“We were really inspired, and wanted to go to university there ourselves so we are going to work really hard so that we can. Also we have brought all of our library ideas back to school and hope to implement as many as we can when the library is re-designed”

Daniel Langham and Aaron Davies, Year 5, Ipsley CE RSA Academy

Case Study 2 – International Gateway for Gifted Youth

Lesley James
Director of
Partnerships,
RSA Academy
in Tipton

IGGY, International Gateway for Gifted Youth, at Warwick targets the top 5% of 11–19 year olds from around the world. It is an international organisation where members develop a personalised online learning network. Navrita Sidhu, in Year 9 at RSA Academy, has been making good use of her IGGY membership by writing about evolution for an international essay competition and was thrilled to be informed that she was the runner-up.

When asked what the benefits of her IGGY membership have been, Navrita said that she had gained enormously by being able to exchange views and opinions with other students across the world. This had helped broaden her own views and her opinions had matured after these discussions. Navrita posted one maths question that she was struggling with on the IGGY site and got responses from across the world. All of which helped her.

As a result of the outstanding value that Navrita has gained from her IGGY membership, she has been appointed the RSA Academy's IGGY Ambassador. One of her roles will be to encourage her peer group and this year's IGGY cohort to use their membership as effectively as she has.





Becky Porter
Science Teacher,
Whitley Academy

Case study 3 – Student Progression Team

Between 16 January and 19 May 2014, students from Whitley Academy worked alongside Warwick and Coventry University as part of Warwick’s student progression team. This is a collaborative programme that aims to place current university students in schools to act as academic mentors for eight weeks. Thirty-two Year 9 Whitley pupils participated, and the programme covered topics such as choosing a degree course, the UCAS application process and Higher Education funding. It culminated with a visit to Warwick and Coventry University, tours of the campuses and lecture taster sessions.

Pupils were chosen on the basis of their parents having not gone into higher education, those on Pupil Premium and those highlighted as gifted and talented. The majority really enjoyed the programme and gained a lot of insight into future possibilities. The Campus trip was the highlight for most pupils, as they had never visited a university before, let alone attended lectures.

It was lovely to see how much of a buzz the student progression team project created with the Whitley pupils. Many had not seen University as a feasible option for them, or had not even considered it, but this programme definitely altered many perceptions, and many pupils have said since the course about what they wish to study at University. It was a very enriching programme for the large majority of Whitley pupils who participated.

Angela Saul

Assistant Principal,
Ipsley CE
RSA Academy

Case study 4 – Campus Challenge

Warwick University students and staff visited us in school during June 2014 to run their Campus Challenge project with 30 of our Year 7 pupils. It is hoped that the project will encourage pupils who may not have thought about attending university in the future to seriously consider it as an option. The session gave pupils the opportunity to ask any questions they had about life at university, and discover more about what they could study.

The pupils worked closely with the university students, asking them questions about life and studies at university. They then had to design their perfect university – giving it a name and designing the courses they would run as well as the campus pupils had to design and film an advert to persuade people to come to their university. There was a big attitude change amongst those who took part in the Campus Challenge. The majority had not seriously considered university as an option for their future but were now excited about the prospect of university and felt that all their concerns and worries had been addressed in the session.





**Reece Garrett,
Callum Dee and
Kai Goodchild**
Year 8, RSA
Academy in Tipton

Case study 5 – Warwick Business School trip

Upon receiving the letter regarding the trip to Warwick, we felt intrigued and anxious about what we would encounter. It didn't disappoint. We expected boring lectures and writing, but instead we took part in several brilliant activities including a brilliantly conceived tour of the buildings.

The day kicked off with an exceedingly informative lecture concerning the university and its expectations. We also had a tour of the grounds which was, in many people's opinion, the best part of the day. During the tour, we had the opportunity to observe campus life and the housing and many of us began to imagine what it would be like to live at Warwick, it was very exciting.

The lesson that followed continued to build our levels of excitement and expectation. We were able to put ourselves in other people's shoes whilst analysing the way businesses and peoples are stereotyped in this day and age. The day concluded with a small lecture and award ceremony, which allowed us to reflect on our own achievements as well as other peoples'.

In summary, we feel the experience was an enriching one and the final award ceremony was a suitable way to cap off an extraordinary day. It definitely made us all consider how important university could be to us.

**Kimberly Nielsen,
Daniel Muckle and
Bren Heald**
Year 12, Arrow Vale
RSA Academy

Case study 6 – Maths trip

On 15 July 2014, five A-level maths students attended a maths taster day at Warwick University. The day was designed to give students an idea of what it would be like to take a degree in maths at one of the country's top universities. Upon arrival to the maths department at Warwick, we were given a lecture on problem-solving techniques and different approaches one can take to maths problems. The lecture was useful, as not only did it give us lots of helpful information for the forthcoming year and our studies in Year 13, it also gave us a really good idea of the style of teaching at university, and the level of responsibility we would be given. We were then split into four separate groups before attending four different sessions that worked through problem solving in different way.

During the hour and a half of lunch, we were taken on a tour of the campus by a student of the university to show the facilities that would be available should we choose to study at the university. We were taken to the library, which has over 1.2 million books, and then to the Arts Centre, where there was a graduation ceremony in progress!



The academies

The RSA Family of Academies currently comprises five schools:



RSA Academy, Tipton, West Midlands

RSA Academy, Tipton is a secondary school for pupils aged 11–18 (Years 7–13) and opened to students in September 2008.

www.rsaacademy.org



Whitley Academy, Coventry

Whitley Academy is a secondary school for pupils aged 11–18 (Years 7–13) in Coventry and joined the RSA Family in July 2011.

www.whitleyacademy.com



Arrow Vale RSA Academy, Redditch, Worcestershire

Arrow Vale RSA Academy opened its doors in September 2012 and is a high school for pupils aged 13–18 (Years 9–13).

www.arrowvaleacademy.co.uk



Ipsley CE RSA Academy, Redditch, Worcestershire

Ipsley is a middle school for pupils aged 9–13 (Years 5–8) and opened as an RSA Academy in January 2013.

www.ipsleyacademy.co.uk



Holyhead School, Handsworth, Birmingham

Holyhead is the most recent school to join the Family, becoming a member in September 2014. It is a secondary school for pupils aged 11–19 (Years 7–13).

www.holyheadschool.com

What is next for the partnership?

The Partnership is really starting to take shape with exciting activities planned for 2014/15 and beyond. Four of the RSA academies will soon embark on a new five year programme funded by the Royal Society of Chemistry called ‘Chemistry for All’ to enthuse pupils about the importance of chemistry and inspire the next generation of chemistry undergraduates. The University of Warwick is one of four leaders of this national programme. The programme will work with students from Year 8 to 12 and will include a blend of in-school and on campus activities using the theme of science and survival. A new cohort of Year 10 students will enrol on the University’s flagship outreach programme UniTracks* and RSA academies’ students will also have the opportunity to engage with a range of academically stimulating activities from taster days to student mentoring, all designed to raise aspirations and attainment. IAG (Information, Guidance and Advice) provision for pupils, parents and teachers remains core to the approach of the partnership.

Paul Blagburn
Senior Assistant Registrar (Outreach)
University of Warwick

* UniTracks is Warwick’s national programme for gifted and talented 14–18 year olds. Students join the four-year programme to learn all about university life, the benefits of pursuing university studies, and how to make an application to the best universities in the country.



RSA Academies aims to give learners the broad range of skills, qualifications and experiences they need to thrive in their continuing education and the world of work.



University of Warwick is one of the UK's leading universities, with an acknowledged reputation for excellence in research and teaching, for innovation, and for links with business and industry.



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