

News release

For Immediate Release

MINISTER FOR SCHOOLS OPENS THE FUTURE FOR GENERATIONS OF SCHOOL CHILDREN

Jim Knight Minister of State for Schools and 14-19 Learners will visit Oxclose Community School this Wednesday, June 20, to mark the beginning of a new future for Sunderland school children.

Mr Knight MP will officially open the first school in Sunderland to benefit from the government's ambitious Building Schools for the Future (BSF) Programme which will transform secondary education by providing 21st century learning environments that engage and inspire young people to learn.

Oxclose Community School, in Washington, is the first of nine Sunderland schools to benefit from a £120 million investment into changing the face of education.

Jim Knight MP, said: "I am looking forward to Wednesday's visit to Sunderland so that I can see for myself the £10.6 million refurbishment of Oxclose Community School.

"Our national investment of £31 billion over the last decade means that hundreds of thousands of pupils are now being taught in new or vastly improved facilities and I am delighted to see the impact this is having in Sunderland.

"I'm sure that our investment at Oxclose Community School will cement the students, teachers and governors in their dedication, commitment and enthusiasm for the future. I wish them the continued success that they deserve."

The £10.6 million refurbishment of the school, which has Visual and Performing Arts status, has not only turned it into a centre of learning excellence with a multi-media resource centre, performing arts suite and state of the art computing equipment, but will also make it a focal point for the community out side of school hours.

The aim of the project has been to transform the 1970's building into a modern school fitted with state of the art facilities and is part of the educational transformation that is happening across the City.

The school now accommodates:

- New Performing Arts block with up to date dance, drama and music opportunities. The block contains dance and drama studios, a suite of hi-tech music rooms and recording and video editing studios as well as a suite of eight music practice rooms for individual or group work.
- Learning Resource Centre for personalised learning fitted with ICT equipment to support on-line learning. The centre is designed to further develop independent learning skills through innovative and motivating lessons, personalised to meet the needs of each student.
- Creation of social spaces and flexible learning areas.
- New main entrance.
- Extended and improved dining area.
- Refurbished specialist areas throughout the school – all classrooms have a high level of ICT, including interactive white boards and radio networking. Specialist areas in science and technology offer new academic and vocational learning for students.

Following an improvement in GCSE results, which according to Ofsted “is among the best in the country” the redesign, refurbishment and rebuild will help pupils and staff reach the next stage in developing a centre of excellence for learning.

Coun Bob Symonds, Leader of Sunderland City Council, said: “Sunderland is one of the first cities in the country to benefit from the Government’s Building Schools for the Future Programme.

“Oxclose School marks the true start of a really exciting journey to transform learning for young people throughout Sunderland.

“This is the first school in the remodeling of Sunderland’s educational structure and is part of a huge project that will inspire personal learning and development for each student for generations to come.

“The new school will give each pupil a solid grounding for their future and their achievements will be celebrated. Preparing for adulthood through learning is a very important stage in anyone’s life and the young learners will get the best start by having access to state of the art technology and facilities.”

The school is the first of its kind to be launched as a new generation school under the unique and innovative “Sunderland Model”.

The journey began in 2004 when Sunderland City Council introduced plans for major secondary school renewal in the first phase of the BSF programme. Building Schools For the Future presents Sunderland with an exceptional opportunity to transform teaching and learning in the city that will improve the life chances for all students in communities across Wearside.

Tim Byles, Chief Executive of Partnerships for Schools, the government agency that has been tasked with delivering Building Schools for the Future said:

“BSF will transform the learning environments for pupils, teachers and local communities across the country and I congratulate Sunderland on the opening of Oxclose today. The new facilities and technology will help young people reach for excellence and unlock the talent that every single one of them has. BSF will make a real and tangible difference to the life chances of every young person across the country and I very much forward to hearing about the difference it makes in Sunderland in the near future.”

Mike Foster, Headteacher of Oxclose Community School, added: “ We are delighted with the results of the BSF project at Oxclose Community School.

“It is important to remember that this is a transformational teaching and learning project and that everything we have done to the building has had the future of learning for our students at the heart of the process.

“I would like to thank students, parents, staff, governors and everyone involved in the project. It hasn’t always been easy but we now have an excellent base from which to develop educational opportunity for all.”

Notes to editors

·During the past 18 months Sunderland City Council has been working closely with the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), Partnerships for Schools (PfS), Lead Sponsors, schools and other stakeholders to move the BSF programme forward.

·The school has the capacity for 1,050 pupils. Work, carried out by Kier Construction, began in October 2005 and completed this month.

£10.6 million of funding was earmarked for the redevelopment of Oxclose Community School. This will be followed by around £110 million investment for schools now being planned to complete the Council’s BSF first phase which will include:

·Two new ‘Sunderland Model’ Academies for 11-16 years old, to replace secondary schools at Hylton Red House (lead sponsor Leighton Group) and Castle View (lead sponsor Northumbrian Water).

·A new ‘Sunderland Model’ Academy for 4-16 years olds, to replace Pennywell Secondary School and Quarry View Primary School (lead sponsor Sunderland Housing Group).

·Replacement of Washington School.

·Sandhill View will receive a complete ICT refresh.

·Major refurbishment at Biddick and St Robert of Newminster Schools.

- Sunderland City Council will be co-sponsor in each of the three new academies.
- Sunderland City Council is committed to ensuring a bright start for all its young people outlined in the Sunderland strategy 2004-07 'A Bright Future' - "To make Sunderland a prosperous city - a desirable and healthy place to live, work, learn and visit, where people can reach their full potential."
- The total amount of money for the BSF programme has been £120million.
- Building Schools for the Future (BSF) is the largest single schools capital investment programme for over 50 years. The aim is to rebuild or renew every one of England's 3,500 state secondary schools during the 15-year lifetime of the programme. Partnerships for Schools (PfS) is the delivery agency for Building Schools for the Future. PfS was established in April 2004 as a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB), and is operated and funded under a joint venture between DfES and Partnerships UK.

ENDS

PHOTO CALL

Media are invited to the official opening of the Oxclose Community School, Dilston Avenue, Washington, on Wednesday, June 20 at 10am. Jim Knight, Minister for Schools and 14-19 Learners will be unveiling a plaque and given a tour of facilities. There will be opportunities for interviews and photographs.

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**Issued by:
Sally Anthony
Tel: 0191-553 1137
Fax: 0191 553 1138
Email: sally.anthony@sunderland.gov.uk**