

Academisation Meeting for Parents & Carers



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 - Questions from Parent and Carers

The Academy Programme

- The Academy programme was launched in 2000 by the Labour Government to secure innovative solutions for secondary schools who were not improving under LA control. This was called the sponsorship programme.
- In 2010 the coalition government (Conservative and Liberal) adapted the very successful programme to include primary schools in the sponsorship programme and to also allow outstanding schools to become academies and operate outside LA control if they chose to. The outstanding schools were encouraged to support other local schools and form a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT).
- The programme expanded to include good schools and now to all schools if their governing body supported the move. This is known as the convertor programme.
- In 2020 the government published a White paper to propose that all schools should be working as part of a MAT by 2030. Although no legislation was passed this is still the government intention.
- All types of schools and all age ranges are now part of the Academy programme working as groups of schools as part of a Multi-Academy Trust
- Over 50% of children are currently educated in Academies with 80% of secondary schools and 39% of primary schools academies (June 2022)

Sponsored Academies – Inadequate and Coasting Schools

- Since 2010 legislation has required all schools which are judged as inadequate by Ofsted become an academy and has also allowed all schools who wish to to also become academies.
- Since 2022 the legislation has been amended to include schools with 2 RI judgements in the 'coasting' category of schools (ie not improving) and thus in the group of schools required to be a sponsored academy.
- It is the view of the Secretary of State that every child should have access to a Good or Outstanding school place (as judged by Ofsted). Schools that have received at least 2 consecutive Ofsted judgements of below Good are not meeting that standard. The DfE requires schools in this position to join a strong academy trust.

What is an Academy Trust?

- Academy Trusts are charities which are set up to improve the quality of education in this country.
- They contain a number of Academies who work together to ensure that the very best education is provided for the children in their schools.
- Academies are all state-funded schools but are not run by the Local Authority. Every Trust is different in the way it delivers its services.
- Some Trusts are very large and national and have significant central capacity and services. They operate more like a local authority and have layers of management and leadership and more services operated from the centre.
- Some Trusts are small and the service provision is more local and personal. They often keep more of the services in the schools and also rely more strongly on engaging local consultants and peer to peer support to bring about improvements.

How do Academy Trusts operate?

- Academy Trusts get their money directly from central government rather than through the local authority. Most delegate money directly to the schools and then charge a 'top-slice' for central services although some pool the funding. Academy Trusts are charities and cannot make a profit.
- By working in partnership with each other, the schools within a trust can share staff, curriculum expertise and effective teaching practices, and work together to deliver the best outcomes for pupils.
- The headteacher is still responsible for the day-to-day running of the school but they are line managed and supported by the Trust.

Defining a 'Strong' Trust

- **Delivering high quality education**, including for disadvantaged children and children with SEND. Effective central leadership teams, strong school leadership and teaching, and using evidence-based curriculum design and implementation.
- **School improvement** - working quickly to improve standards within all their schools, particularly strong at transforming previously under performing schools.
- **Strategic governance** - operating an effective and robust governance structure. Utilising the expertise and skills on its boards to oversee strategic direction and hold leaders to account. A strong local identity, engaging effectively with parents and the wider community.
- **Workforce** - training, recruiting, developing, deploying and retaining great teachers and leaders throughout their careers and prioritising staff wellbeing.
- **Strong and effective financial management** - prioritising the use of resources, including the estate, to deliver the best educational experience for children.

What will change for staff?

- Staff will be employed by the Trust, not the LA.
- Their contracts and existing terms will transfer over to the Trust.
- They will work collaboratively with a wider group of schools.
- There will be many opportunities to work with other schools, including visits, observations, subject networks, training.
- There will be increased career and individual development opportunities.

What might change for pupils/parents?

- Oversight: there will be strong oversight and support for the leadership of the school with the headteacher line managed by the Trust.
- School name: most common change is to add the word 'academy' (eg Billingshurst Primary Academy). The uniform is unlikely to change.
- National Curriculum: Academies do not have to follow the NC but most do. MATs may have specific schemes or policies in place regarding what is taught but there is still likely to be significant local flexibility.
- Policies: Policies such as Finance and HR will change as the school will have to follow different national guidance. It is possible that some other policies will change such as behaviour, admissions, teaching and learning
- Parental engagement: Academy Trusts are required to engage with parents and the community effectively and thus some systems for this may change

BPS: What will happen next?

- Prior to the Ofsted inspection the governing body was researching Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) to support the school.
- After the inspection, the CoG received a letter from the DfE to notify the school that it is coasting (not making necessary improvements) and that the DfE are exploring the best MAT for the school to join with the capacity to drive and sustain the necessary school improvement.
- The GB has shared its research and preferences with the DfE but the final decision will be made by the Regional Director in consultation with the Advisory Board.
- We will then be matched to a strong Multi-Academy Trust who will begin working with us to prepare for transfer.

Stakeholder Engagement

- Where a school has a double RI judgement there is a requirement to academise and thus no requirement to undertake a consultation.
- It is good practice for schools to inform parents, staff and other key stakeholders of the DfE's decision. This is the reason for our meeting tonight.
- The governing body will advise parents as soon as they are informed by the DfE of the Trust which will sponsor the school.
- Once a Trust is identified the Trust will meet with both parents and staff to share their operating model and give them the opportunity to ask questions.

How will Academisation link to the Headteacher appointment?

- How the timing of the appointment will link with the timing of academisation is not certain.
- Academisation usually takes 6-9 months from the notification of which Trust will sponsor the school.
- Up until legal transfer to an Academy Trust, the appointment decisions remain with the Governing Body.
- Once we know which Academy Trust will sponsor the school, we will involve them in the recruitment process.
- The Academy Trust will also be involved in supporting the school and supporting the induction of the headteacher.

We believe this will be an exciting and positive journey for the school and that the enhanced leadership that we have put in place for the transition period will ensure that the very best opportunities will be provided for your children.

Thank you

Questions