

# Frequently asked Questions About Academy Conversions

The information in this fact sheet is intended to help answer some of the questions which may arise when considering conversion to academy status. This information cannot in any way replace the informal conversations and formal consultation that takes place during the conversion process.

## **What is an academy?**

An academy is an all-ability school that is directly funded by central government and independent of direct control by local government. Academies are inspected by Ofsted under the same framework as maintained schools. Academies are self-governing.

## **What is a Multi-Academy Trust?**

A Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) is an education charity, limited by guarantee and has member academy schools within it. The MAT is governed by Members and Trustees (sometimes known as Directors) with local governance included in its structure.

Academies are still part of the community and serve children, young people and families in a particular area and retain the same responsibilities as any maintained school as part of the learning community. They continue to work in partnerships with other schools and organisations for the benefit of local communities.

## **How does governance work?**

There is a Board of Trustees who are ultimately responsible for the work of the Trust and the academies. However, they devolve much of the responsibility to the individual academies and their respective local governing bodies. Each academy has its own governing body who work with the academy Principal to check that the academy is making good progress and add additional challenge and scrutiny to the work of the school. Each governing body has parent/carer and staff representatives. The academy Principal is always a governor for the time they are employed in that role.

The governing body will set the vision for the academy in line with the overall commitment of the multi academy trust. The governing body also draft the academy spending plan and improvement plan for approval by The Trust Board. The governing body has delegated powers from the Trust Board which will include areas such as finance, curriculum and pupil outcomes/progress, estates and staffing.

## **Why does our school have to join a MAT?**

Strong MATs can mobilise expertise and research to develop and share teaching and curricular resources. Strong trusts promote a shared vision and ethos across their school and ensure robust accountability through a single governance structure.

## **Why have Governors decided to join Three Spires Trust?**

St Paul's CofE Aided Primary School conducted thorough research and due diligence on the Trust they are proposing to join. The values of the MAT are already aligned with St Paul's CofE Aided Primary School in particular their ethos around the inclusion of all pupils. Continuing to work with the same group of schools is something that governors feel would continue to strengthen and bring stability to the school.

### **How long does academy conversion take and how will the process affect the day-to-day running of the school?**

Once a decision is made to convert and approval given, the entire process from start to finish generally takes 4-9 months, with conversions being official on the 1st of the month. It would be a smooth transition in which students, staff and parents are unlikely to perceive any change, and no disruption to the normal running of the school. If we convert, the date would be determined with the Department for Education in consultation with the Trust and school and we would let you know when it is confirmed.

### **What is the role of the MAT Chief Executive Officer (CEO)?**

They are the Accounting Officer for the Trust and the strategic support for schools. The CEO is the key contact for the Regional Director and the DfE and acts as the point of first contact to ensure schools are not distracted from their core purpose of teaching and learning.

### **The priority for our school is the education of young people. How will you ensure that the academy formation does not distract us from this?**

Part of the work of the school and MAT will be to carry out 'due diligence' exercises which will make clear what extra support to convert may be needed. Three Spires Trust will work with us to ensure we can continue to focus on the teaching and learning and progress of children. It's important that the school is open about the amount of support we might need to enter into and go through the process.

### **What is the main motivation for converting to academy status?**

- There are increased opportunities for joint working across a group of schools - shaping the provision to meet the future needs of our children, families and communities based on a local / collaborative proposal of working together and building on existing strong partnerships and good practice.
- To offer additional career opportunities for all staff making the Trust more attractive for high performing teachers/support staff
- To develop the expertise of all staff to further improve effectiveness and outcomes for children.
- To generate financial efficiencies to invest back into the classroom for the benefit of the children.

### **What do parents and carers need to know?**

- The school is not proposing to change its character and will continue to look, feel and be the same as it is now
- The School Leadership team and Governing Body will continue to run the school daily as they do now, and parents will continue to be represented on the Governing Body
- The name of the school will not change (unless there is a demand to consider doing so during the consultation), and the school will not change its admissions policy outside of any statutory consultation period.
- Children with special needs will continue to receive additional support in the way they do now.
- Our local schools will continue to work very closely together for each other as well as your children and will be provided with more support to help them become even better.
- The multi-academy trust arrangements will share some central services across the schools which will help them be more efficient and make sure that funding is focused on teaching, learning and support for children.
- The multi-academy trust will work very closely and co-operatively with local partners, including other schools, community groups and organisations, and the local authority.

### **Is an academy like a business?**

No. A business makes profit for its shareholders. An academy is a charitable trust which cannot make profit.

**Who makes the decision to become an academy?**

The governing body. The Department for Education then approve the request.

**Are academies bound by the same rules and regulations as other schools?**

Academies are required to follow the law and guidance on admissions, special educational needs and exclusions.

**Will the academy follow the National Curriculum?**

Yes, but it would have more freedom to try different things in the curriculum and make sure that what is taught is relevant to our pupils and their specific needs. It must be broad and balanced.

**Does becoming an academy change the relationship with local schools and the community?**

No. Academy funding agreements state that they must ensure that we will be at the heart of its community, collaborating and sharing facilities and expertise with other local schools and the wider community.

**As an academy, will it still work with the local authority (LA)?**

Academies are independent of the local authority. However, we wish to continue working with the LA, other local schools and local partners.

**What about funding?**

The Department for Education via the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) meets the running costs for an academy. Academy funding is calculated on a like-for-like basis with local authority schools. Therefore, the academy will have a similar budget to that of its predecessor-maintained school. With greater freedom to procure services from other providers and to realise cost efficiencies across the network, the academy will be able to make more efficient use of resources to support school improvement. Like other schools, an academy cannot run at a loss or agree a deficit budget, i.e. it must break-even.

**How will the school be accountable financially?**

An academy is governed by the rules and regulations for charitable trusts and company law, e.g. we will be required to produce and file accounts and trustees cannot be paid. There will be robust systems with an audit conducted by an external independent auditor.

**What functions would remain the statutory responsibility of the Local Authority (LA)?**

- Home to school transport
- Education psychology, SEND statementing and assessment
- Monitoring of SEND provision
- Prosecution of parents for non-attendance
- Assigned SEND resources for pupils/students with rare conditions needing individually tailored provision
- Provision of specialist facilities for a pupil who is no longer registered at a school.

**Who will be responsible, and pay for assessments of pupils/students with additional needs?**

The LA retains the same statutory responsibility for students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in academies as they would for a maintained school. We would continue to work closely with the LA to ensure that our SEND pupils are well provided for and to ensure that the LA meets their statutory commitments with regard to pupils.

**Does it cost to become an academy?**

Yes. There are legal, financial and project costs associated with becoming an academy. The government gives each converting school £25,000 to contribute towards these costs.

**Who will own the school building and land?**

The academy trust will either hold the freehold or enter into a 125-year lease for the land and buildings.

**Will the staff stay the same?**

When a school converts from a local authority-maintained school to a new academy, all permanent staff are entitled to transfer to it under the same employment terms and conditions. The process of conversion assumes 'as is' for staff and that they continue to teach the same classes as previously.

As a voluntary aided school the governing body are currently the employer. This will change to the Trust upon conversion.

**Will you consult with staff, community and parents?**

Yes, we will consult with all key stakeholder groups during the transition phase. This will include the sharing of our plans to explore becoming an academy and joining Three Spires Trust and an opportunity to gather feedback and suggestions, as well as addressing any questions or concerns. A clear consultation will take place.

**Will the school remain non-selective?**

Yes - academies are non-selective schools. Academies are required to follow the law and guidance on admissions, SEND and exclusions as if they were maintained schools. It is the aim of the Trust to ensure that all academies provide high quality, inclusive education for all local children.

**Will the school need to change its name?**

We will not change our name unless there is a compelling reason during consultation to do so.

**Can the academy work with the council and other schools?**

Yes. Where possible and appropriate, the academy will buy back services from the local authority. The academy can work with any schools it wishes if this makes a difference to the education of the children.

**Will there be a new uniform?**

We have no plans to change our uniform as a result of becoming an academy unless there is a compelling reason during consultation to do so.

**What date would the Academy open?**

The proposal is for St Paul's CofE Aided Primary School to open as an Academy on the 1 September 2025.

**How can I find out more about academies?**

Visit the website for the department of education on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) and search for academies.

If you would like to provide us with any feedback or comments, you can complete our online survey or complete the reply slip below on the next page.

## YOUR OPINION IS IMPORTANT TO US

If you have any comments to make or questions which have not been answered, please either complete the form below and email to [hello@gailkhanassociates.co.uk](mailto:hello@gailkhanassociates.co.uk) and/or you can also complete a short online survey by logging on to our school website <https://www.stpaulscofeprimaryschool.co.uk/>

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### **Academy Conversion Consultation**

Name: .....

Email: .....  
(this will only be used to respond directly to any questions you highlight below)

Relationship to School: (please tick appropriate box)

PARENT/ CARER       TEACHER       SUPPORT STAFF       GOVERNOR

UNIONS

OTHER  Please state \_\_\_\_\_

**Comments/Questions** (please write below)