

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is an Academy?

An Academy is a state school that is run by an Academy Trust. The Academy Trust enters into an agreement with the Secretary of State for Education that sets out its responsibilities and accountabilities for the effective running of the Academy. The Academy is funded directly by the Government not through the Local Authority. The Trust is given charitable exemption, which means it must operate much like a charity.

2. What is a Multi-Academy Trust?

A Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) is when 2 or more Academies come together in partnership. Our Governing Body believes that the best option is to form a local Multi Academy Trust from the three schools. Each school will keep its own name. Each school will convert to an Academy. In the future, it will be possible for other Academies to join the Trust.

3. How would converting to an Academy benefit our School?

As detailed above, these changes are about enhancing teaching and learning for all children. They would allow us to maintain control of our schools for our community, share skills and operate more effectively.

4. Who will be responsible for running our school?

The newly formed Trust will have a Board of Directors including individuals from the local Governing body. The Trust Board will delegate powers to the governing body which will be a similar role that they currently have. A Leadership structure is yet to be finalised.

5. What is involved in becoming an Academy?

The school will complete a consultation with parents, pupils, staff and the wider community which the Governors will take into account in reaching its decision. The Governing Body has voted for this proposal in principle and made a formal application to The Secretary of State for Education and the Headteachers Board for the East who have formally supported the application and have given academy orders. Each school is given £25,000 to convert although the vast majority of this will be used in the conversion process including legal fees etc.

6. Would the school have to change its name, logo or uniform?

No, the Governors have no plans to change the name, logo, uniform or individual identity of each school.

7. How will being an Academy affect staff?

Currently, the employer for staff in non academy schools is Norfolk County Council. After conversion all staff at all the schools will be employed by the Trust. Staff are legally protected to transfer under the same employment terms and conditions, including pensions. Their continuity of service is protected, and all staff will be consulted in accordance with the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations. (Northgate High School Trust employees will also transfer to the new Unity Academy Trust)

8. How are the children affected?

In many ways the children will not notice any immediate difference; they will be in the same uniform, in the same classrooms with the same teaching staff. We will continue to strive for an outstanding education for all our children. However, in time the children may notice changes and improvements in the way that they learn, resulting from the greater training opportunities given to teaching staff to innovate and improve the pupils' learning. Greater opportunities for airing learning experiences across the schools. Improvements in resources and facilities through increased buying and services power.

9. Will we get more money as an Academy?

Academies receive the same amount of per-pupil funding as they would receive from the Local Authority as a maintained school. All funding comes direct from Government to the Multi Academy Trust which controls the overall budget. Each school does not necessarily have more money, but as a group the schools are better able to control their part of the budget. An initial £25,000 conversion grant is received to cover costs and each small school can apply for a further subsidy.

10. What are the risks of becoming an Academy?

The change to Academy takes a school out of Local Authority control, but does not exclude the school from Local Authority support. For example, Academies can continue to receive finance, HR, behavioural support and other services from the Local Authority and where these represent 'best value' the MAT would use these services. Where the MAT feels that others can provide better services or better value the change to Academy increases the freedom to make these changes.

There are risks associated with not changing to Academy status. At some stage in the future, any school might be influenced to become part of a larger Academy Chain. We believe that the ability to create a local MAT, under local direction, offers the best opportunity to sustain vibrant, successful local schools.

11. How will admissions to the school be affected?

The school will become its own admissions authority but will be required to adopt clear and fair admission arrangements in line with the admissions law and the School Admissions Code. The Local Authority will continue to have responsibility for making sure there are sufficient places locally and will coordinate the admissions process for all schools. This means parents will still only have to complete one application per child. Applications will still be via the coordinated process.

12. Does becoming an Academy change the relationship with other schools and the community?

No, Academies must ensure that they continue to be at the heart of their community, collaborating and sharing facilities and expertise with other schools and the wider community.

13. Will our responsibilities in relation to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and exclusions change?

No, responsibilities as an Academy in relation to SEND and exclusions will be just the same as they are now.

14. Can a child with a statement nominate an Academy as his or her school of choice?

Yes, schools converting to Academy status can retain the admissions criteria they currently use. These arrangements and related processes must at all times comply with the School Admissions Code.