



Cloverlea Primary School

ACADEMY CONVERSION CONSULTATION - Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is an Academy?

An academy is a government funded school that is independent to the local authority.

An academy is still part of the community and serve children and families in that area. They retain the same responsibilities as any maintained school as part of the learning community.

How is an academy different to a local authority school?

In terms of the day-to-day functioning, an academy school will not be noticeably different to a Local Authority maintained school.

Responsibility for funding the school, monitoring performance and any capital projects will fall to central government rather to local government.

Becoming an academy does not mean that the character, nature or ethos of the school would need to change at all. Academy status gives schools additional responsibilities, and also greater freedoms:

- Academies don't have to follow the national curriculum
- Can set their own term times.
- Still have to follow the same rules on admissions, special educational needs and exclusions
- Academies get money direct from the government, not the local council.
- They're run by an academy trust which employs the staff.

What is a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT)?

A multi-academy trust is a formal collaboration between two or more academy schools, where all of the schools in the trust are overseen by a single board of trustees. Schools in a multi-academy trust do not need to be the same type of school. For example, primary schools can be in a multi-academy trust

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with secondary and/or special schools. Once established, multi-academy trusts are able to grow if more schools wish to join.

Who runs a MAT?

The Board of Trustees runs the MAT and is directly accountable to the secretary of state for education.

The headteacher(s) would contribute to the leadership of the whole group under the leadership of the Board of Trustees.

Each school would continue to have its own Local Governing Body (LGB). Above the Local Governing Bodies would be The Trust, essentially functioning as one board of governors overseeing the local boards. They would be the main decision-making group and accountable for all schools within the Trust.

The Trust would consist of Trustees, specifically selected for their skills, tasked with ensuring the excellence of all schools and delegating powers to the local governing bodies. As with governors, Trustees receive no remuneration for their function and serve as volunteers for our charitable endeavour.

Trustees would come from the LGBs as well as through a recruitment process to secure key skills on the Trust.

Above the Trustees would sit Members. The Trust would be a registered charity and the Members would sign the Articles of Association (rule book) turning the group of schools into a charitable trust. Members would function as founders and shareholders of the Trust, but absolutely no financial benefit would be obtained. The Members would create the charitable trust because they believe in the vision and values and methods of this enterprise and are responsible for appointing the Trustees and ensuring the success of the Trust at an annual general meeting.

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How are Academies funded?

At the moment, the school receives its funding from the central government via the Local Authority. The Local Authority takes a slice of the funding available to pay for services such as school improvement service, education support services, property management and maintenance services, human resources, payroll and financial services. The rest is then delegated to the school.

As an academy, the school receives the additional funding adding to the overall budget.

This increase of direct funding to the school is clearly something that would benefit us greatly, although we would have to buy back services as we required them.

As provision from the local authority recedes, alternative providers may have to be sought and the additional funding that academy status brings will be essential to enable the school to buy those self-same services.

Are academies profit making?

Academies are NOT profit making. No one can make any money from the company. The company is limited by guarantee. It does not pay dividends and makes no profit. It is however a legal entity and will mean that the school is able to enter into contracts, employ staff and be recognised as a legal body.

Would admission arrangements change?

As a community school admissions arrangements are set by the Local Authority, and the LA also decides which pupils should be offered places at our schools. We are committed to these principles and the current admission arrangements would remain in place. If for some reason the academy wanted to change its admissions arrangements in the future, consultation would be required and would still comply with the Admissions Code.

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Can schools withdraw from the conversion process?

Schools are able to withdraw right up to the point that they sign the Funding Agreement. Once this is signed there is a legally binding agreement between the Secretary of State and the academy and the termination process would require a long notice period.

What is the timescale for conversion?

The entire process from start to finish generally takes 3-5 months, with conversions being official on the 1st of the month. It would be a smooth transition in which children, 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 and we would let you know when it is confirmed.

Under local authority control the school is ultimately accountable to the local education authority. Who would it be accountable to in the future ie. who could force changes if the trust were to make poor decisions?

Academies are accountable to:

- the Regional Director (RD)
- the DfE
- Education Funding Agency (EFA – a Department for Education executive agency)
- Ofsted

When is the last point at which the school can change its mind about conversion?

A school can change its mind right up to the point where documents are sent to the secretary of state for signature, which is usually during the last two weeks before planned conversion date.

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