

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS.

As you will expect we have already had many questions that we wanted to find answers to as a Governing Body. Many of the questions raised are answered in the documents provided 'Academy Discussion Paper April 2015' and also 'Discussion for Full Governing Body – further reading'.

Please find below some further questions that have also been raised. They will be updated at regular intervals. They are in no particular order.

Will converting to Academy status mean our school will no longer be part of the building programme announced in February? This will not affect our position in the building programme.

Does Ofsted inspect academies? Yes, in exactly the same way as for maintained schools.

Does the Governing Body consider that it is necessary to have a sponsor? There are many schools that are sponsored schools with Ofsted grades from Inadequate to Outstanding. Some have chosen to become a sponsored academy and some were forced to become them if they were not performing well. It is not mandatory for schools to become a sponsored academy if they are judged to be performing well. As Upton Heath Church of England Primary School was judged as being Good overall we would not need a sponsor. Over time we would expect to develop formal and informal collaborative arrangements with other schools including academies and local authority schools as we do now.

How would the relationship with the Local Authority change?

The academy would continue to work closely with the local authority by playing a full part in the local family of schools and working within the local service delivery areas. The school would continue to work with Cheshire West and Chester on common issues and would remain part of the local family of schools. The Local Authority would retain responsibility for numerous statutory duties, including Special Educational Needs.

How would the relationship with the Diocese change?

Again, we would continue to work closely with the Diocese by playing a full and active part in the Diocesan family of schools. The Church status of the school would not change.

How would the academy re-provide the services that the local authority currently manages? For any services that the school would become responsible for upon conversion, it would need to ensure that it chooses the most appropriate method to meet the needs of the school and provide best value for money. The options available to the school would include providing it in-house, working in partnership with other schools/academies to provide the service, or purchasing it from a provider (which could be Cheshire West and Chester). Schools already consider how to work together to provide services, ensuring both high quality and effective value for money. Conversion to academy status would possibly give us further opportunities to do this.

Would the school day and term dates change? Term dates have been agreed by the governing body up until 2016-2017. After that we will continue to seek to align with local primary and secondary schools.

Would there be changes to the admissions criteria? The admission policy is the responsibility of the local governing body. We do not anticipate making any significant changes to the current admissions policy, including in respect of children with special

education needs. In the event that changes were ever proposed, there would be an extensive consultation.

Would there be a change in uniform? We do not consider that there would be any need to change uniform if the decision was made to convert, however this is something that we have not discussed, as we are only at the consultation stage.

Would the school name change? Once again, as above, we are only at the consultation stage and therefore this is not something that we have discussed. As with other decisions of this nature this would be something the local governing body would consult with stakeholders over.

Who is responsible for deciding if a pupil needs a Statement of special educational needs? The local authority would retain the legal responsibility for the allocation of statements, and determining whether the academy is named on the statement.

What are the safeguards for vulnerable students? Under the terms of the Funding Agreement (which is the contract between the Academy Trust and the Secretary of State), an academy has to act in exactly the same way as a maintained school in relation to Special Education Needs, behaviour, and exclusions. Admissions policies will not discriminate on the grounds of ability or special needs.

Who owns the land at an academy? The expectation of the Department of Education is that land owned by the local authority would be leased by the Local Authority to the Academy Trust. This lease would be for 125 years at a peppercorn rent. The local authority would retain the freehold title to the land. The land that is built on is owned by the Diocesan Board of Education and would continue to be so. Our school would become responsible for the land and buildings.

How does an academy access capital funding? Academies receive some capital funding, called Devolved Formula Capital, as do maintained schools. This funding is provided directly to the academy. Whereas the school currently relies on the local authority for funding for more substantial works, whether these are for repair / maintenance or for improvements, academies are generally reliant on central government. The school will also be able to bid for capital directly to Department of Education.

Can academy status be 'undone'? The Academy or the Secretary of State can terminate the contract (the Funding Agreement) to run the academy, but there is a seven year termination clause (which could potentially be varied if both sides agreed that was in pupils best interests). Converting to academy status is therefore a long-term decision. In the event that the Funding Agreement is terminated (and there is no other funding agreement in place) the lease and, where relevant, the supplemental agreement, will be terminated.