

The school is independent. How would it safeguard any contingency for unexpected events? Would it receive governmental help?

It would safeguard against unexpected events in the same way as it does now. Financially there would be different ways of gaining additional funding. For example, in the unlikely event of expenditure exceeding the budget it would work with the Education Funding Agency, a part of the Department for Education, to put a financial recovery plan in place.

What does this mean for our children? What obligations do you have to sustain a curriculum which ensures our children are prepared and able to move up towards high school at a suitable, minimum (although would desire above this) national level?

A school must provide a curriculum that prepares their pupils for their high school. At Upton Heath C of E Primary School we already do this very successfully. We would not wish to change anything that would have a detrimental impact on pupils. The opportunity to become an Academy would enable us to develop aspects of the curriculum if we judge it in the best interests of our pupils to do so.

What are the proposals for changes in or extra curriculum classes/activities?

At this point of the consultation we have not put any proposals together as we are exploring if this would be a viable option for the school in the future.

Will the school day lengthen to fit in additional Lessons specific to the schools desired additional curriculum (no issues with this if the case)?

We have no plans to do this..

How will you develop the curriculum?

If we decided to become an Academy we would look to develop the curriculum to ensure it prepared our pupils, not only for High school, which we already do well, but so that the content reflects the demands that face our children as they prepare for adult life. The National Curriculum has many strengths; however we can identify many innovative ways that we enable us to develop it further, relevant to the children and community of Upton. For example, we will look to use local history and geography and take

examples from science that are relevant to our local flora, fauna and industry.

What happens when/if it fails. does the school return to LA or would it go under new management?

Local Authority schools that 'fail' are forced to become an Academy. If an Academy fails then management could well change if it is not believed that the leadership of the school has the capacity to rapidly improve. In practice, this means that an Academy sponsor is introduced along with their new management team.

As a teaching assistant I feel that I have no opportunity to be rewarded for hard work. If we became an academy would there be a chance that teaching assistants could follow a similar process to the teachers? I believe that they show evidence to the governors in a formal interview and apply for a higher grade/a change in pay scale. I would be happy to do this and would give me the incentive to gain more skills and earn more pay.

Yes, the Academy Trust, as the employer, could look to change its reward systems.

Will the church have any greater influence or freedom to influence the curriculum? If so, what will it be?

The church would not choose to have any greater influence on the curriculum than it has now.

Is this privatising our children's education?

The school would become independent of the Local Authority but would not have shareholders and would not be for profit. It is accountable to the public through many mechanisms such as Ofsted and the Education Funding Agency, and it would remain accountable to the Diocese of Chester for its Christian ethos. The property would remain in the ownership of the Local Authority and the Diocese.

What will be the cost in the long term, with the extra training and wages to maintain the very best staff?

We already put the appropriate training and wages in place to ensure we attract and maintain the very best staff.

Will all the money be paid by government?

Funding comes directly to the school from the government.

Why will there be corporate sponsors and why will they get a say in our children's education?

No

If the school have the ability to choose what and how the children learn, will everything be geared towards the smarter kids, or will the kids that have difficulties be catered for too?

The curriculum will have to meet the needs of all learners otherwise when we are inspected by OFSTED we would not be meeting the expectations of the government. The admissions policy will not be selective and the school will continue to welcome and value all children.

Will there be more help for the PTA and more money for reading books that aren't falling apart?

The PTA are a self-funding group. Reading books are replaced when appropriate.

If parents are against the school being converted to an academy, will it still go ahead if the majority of governors want it to go ahead?

The Governing Body makes the decision and the consultation has been set up to hear everyone's view. There are parent representatives on the governing body who will influence the decision of the governing body.

How will it affect the children? Will there be new school uniform? When will it go through?

The decision will only be made if the Governing Body believes that it is in the best interest of current and future learners for Upton Heath C of E Primary to become an Academy.

The school is performing well - what is the need to go through the trouble of converting (cost, admin etc).

The Governing Body would not make a decision that was troublesome as there would be no point to this. The transition would be seamless and smooth.

Will the attention of the head remain purely on the pupils achieving ahead of their expectations if the school was to convert? I feel it could possibly be a huge distraction

The role of the Head teacher would remain the same however there would be some additional freedoms regarding having more autonomy relating the strategic direction of the school.

What are the tangible benefits? You could become more innovative, please give concrete examples?

We have spoken to a number of head teachers from different primary academies who have shared many tangible benefits ,some are from stand-alone academy and some for trusts. These include:

- ***Shared school improvement priority 'To collaborate with other schools in the Academy Trust to forge personnel links, developing protocols and procedures to ensure efficient and effective working practices in all schools (management of the academy status)'***
- ***School Self Evaluation summaries and School Development Plans have been shared to ensure a unified approach to school evaluation and improvement***
- ***Ability to provide school to school support – both stand alone and multi academy trust;***
- ***Opportunities for staff to meet collaboratively to share good practice;***
- ***Shared commitment to ensure high expectations for all pupils within the trust which would be non-negotiable unlike present practice where some schools collaborate when they choose to and dip in an out to support planned;***
- ***The Heads of Schools meeting to agree systems and procedures that can be used across schools eg. assessing the 'curriculum without levels'***
- ***Shared working for all staff members which improves efficiency, performance, consistency and professionalism.***

How will teaching be affected / improved?

From the research that the Governing Body has undertaken to date, it would suggest that the formalisation of a commitment to a multi-academy trust would be beneficial to enabling professional development for staff across a group of schools. Sharing of expertise, enabling coaching of staff and shared resources would make the schools more efficient and have improve outcomes for the pupils as a result.

Please identify any drawbacks.

The Academy discussion paper dated April 27th details reasons for and against conversion. This is available on the school website under 'Academy Consultation'.

Reassurances that Head staff will be retained given all the hard work to come out of special I have great fears that as an academy the school could easily very quickly revert back to where it was 3 years ago.

The Headteacher and staff have worked extremely hard to come out of Special Measures. The school went into Special Measures when it was under the control of the Local Authority. Mechanisms to ensure this does not happen again would be the same if the school was Local Authority controlled or Independent. The accountability would be with the Board of Trustees if the school was an Academy and the Regional Schools Commissioner would intervene if the school was not performing as it should.

From speaking to teacher friends they've suggested if you're consulted it's almost a foregone conclusion.

The Governing Body of Upton Heath Church Of England Primary School has not made a decision prior to the consultation. The reasons why they have decided to consult are detailed in the paper 'Academy Discussion Paper – April 27th' which is available on the website. The Governing Body is seeking to hear the views of parents, staff and the wider community and has provided opportunities for people to share their opinions and ask questions about academy status.

Academies tend to have a negative connotation with people - I don't know why. If I'd known Upton Heath was planning to become an academy I would have probably chosen a different school for my children. How can I have confidence they will be well rounded when they progress to high school based on the curriculum they've covered?

The curriculum any school develops has to ensure that they are developing children who have a broad and balanced curriculum that meets their needs enabling them to be successful members of society whilst also achieving high academic standards. Our school has a vision to inspire a love of learning. Our core professional purpose is to provide exciting learning opportunities to prepare happy, confident children for the future. We would not seek to change this. Further, primary Academies are judged on how well pupils achieve and how ready they are for secondary schools in exactly the same way as Local Authority schools.

As the school is being run as a business, what happens if they get into financial difficulty?

The school has to run as a non-profit making business now and this would not change. If it ran into financial difficulty then it would seek assistance from the Education Funding Agency in the same way that it would from the Local Authority now.

I don't want my children's education to suffer due to poor decisions by management. I want them to be told by well trained, engaged teachers.
The leaders of the schools would remain and their decision making would not be altered by the fact that the school was academy. The commitment of the leadership of the school is that all children are taught by appropriately trained staff otherwise we would not be able to ensure our core professional purpose is achieved.

What are the milestones (timewise) for the consultation process?
Consultation will happen from 27th April 2015 and will close 26th June 2015. The Governing Body will meet on the 7th July 2015 to discuss the outcomes of the consultation. Decisions whether to proceed to place an expression of interest with the DfE would be discussed.

Do you still have to deliver the same national curriculum, how is this checked?
No we do not, however we do need to provide a curriculum that the children are successful in. They still need to take their Statutory Assessment Tasks and Phonics screening. The school would still be inspected by Ofsted.

Who is an academy accountable to for how it's spent it's budget?
The Department for Education. All accounts have to be audited and published.

Would you need a sponsor and if so who would that be?
No.

Will becoming an academy mean that some other LA controlled schools suffer financially for your short term increase in funds?

No. There is no increase in funds beyond the Education Services Grant which is used to cover certain overheads.

How will you change the curriculum? And maintain academic standards?
Any changes to the curriculum would be decided through consultation with the staff. Academic standards would have to improve further if any changes were made otherwise there would be no point in making changes.

Why now? In March the school announced money to be rebuilt? So far nothing has happened. This proposal has all the hallmarks of "putting the cart before the horse".

The reason why this is being considered now is outlined in the document 'Academy Discussion Paper – April 27th 2015'. This will not affect the rebuild of the school.

What is the timescale of supporting another school?

As we have not made a decision yet as if we are to become an academy or not this has not been discussed. This would be part of the planning process if we decided to become an academy.

What is the business support function you would aspire to establish as part of the running of a SUCCESSFUL Academy?

Technically speaking, the Academy Trust is a company limited by guarantee. The school office will need to replace the current Local Authority systems to manage income and expenditure and also support external audit and financial reporting. We will buy in services to do this. Other services, such as HR, will be bought in externally as they are now; it is possible that we will continue to buy them from the Local Authority.

How do you intend to transition from a LEA school to an Academy whilst maintaining and indeed improving standards?

We will continue to use the same processes and devote the same amount of leadership time to improving standards during and after transition to Academy status as we do now. The Local Authority does not currently have a role in maintaining or improving standards.

How are the views of the teaching staff weighted in the consultation, because they need to be heavily weighted more so than the parents views in my opinion.

We agree that staff views are very important so we consulted the staff extensively prior to the public consultation, and the dialogue with staff is ongoing. Staff have elected representatives who are members of the Governing body who will have the final vote. Staff are being consulted by all members of the governing body. They are a significant part of the process.

Where has the driver to convert to an Academy come from?

Please refer to the document 'Academy Discussion Paper – April 27th 2015'.

What does the new curriculum that Upton Heath would implement look like?

This work would happen if the decision is made to convert. We are not at this stage yet as the decision has not been made however we do see possibilities that could enhance the curriculum. These may include developing a more bespoke curriculum based on the National Curriculum and International Primary Curriculum that we use now. We expect that the changes would consist of adjustments to aspects of the curriculum and do not anticipate a radical replacement with a completely new curriculum. We would use the Academy freedoms to further develop the distinctive strengths and characteristics of our school and build on our current and successful ethos.

Who would be consulted regarding any changes in curriculum and how?

We would use the same internal processes that we use successfully within the constraints of the National Curriculum. In brief, the leadership team would set up a facilitator group and invite representatives from the community to work on this.

Specifically what improvements do the Governors/Head believe academy status will bring to the current pupils of the school.

Please refer to the document 'Academy Discussion Paper – April 27th 2015'. During our consultation we hope to review and evaluate these points. More specifically we will:

Adjust our curriculum so that it is even more suitable to the needs and interest of children in our community

Use our Academy freedoms to attract, develop and retain teachers and support staff, enhancing their skills, thereby improving our provision.

We will use resources more effectively to realise better value for money or access higher quality support services.

Formal and informal collaborations with other academies in the Chester area and further afield will provide opportunities to develop skills and share capabilities.

What measures will the school put in place to ensure the budget is spent to benefit the school and the pupils and how will this be monitored.

The budget will be monitored by the Education Funding Agency which is part of the DfE.

How are the school held accountable for performance will they still be audited by OFSTED?

In the same way as it is now. Yes standards school will still be monitored by OFSTED as well as Regional Schools Commissioners.

Is the school refurb / rebuild dependent the outcome of becoming an academy?

No.

Will Upton Heath develop closer links with the other academies within the Upton / Hoole area.

The school already has links with these schools through the Education Improvement Partnership, but we will be seeking to deepen them.

How and when is the decision on Academy status to be taken?

The Governing Body has decided to find out more about what it means to become an Academy and will meet on July 7th to discuss the outcomes from it. If the decision is to become an Academy then timescales would then be drawn up.

What happens if things go wrong?

The role of the Trustees and Board of Governors is to ensure that things do not go 'wrong'. This is what happens now. OFSTED are still involved to make judgements about the school. Statutory testing will remain as will the Phonics Screening Test. Ultimately, should the school be unsuccessful the Regional Schools Commissioner would intervene and appoint a new sponsor who would introduce their own management team. In practice, this is what would happen today if the school was unsuccessful as a voluntary controlled Local Authority school.

Can we go back to LA?

No.

Will current TAs have the opportunity for job progression?

Yes.

With the government wanting to get rid of TAs how will that affect TAs if we become an academy?

The strategic vision of the school is determined by the Governors, as it is now, working alongside the Senior Leaders of the school. The Head teacher makes recommendations to the GB about

staffing. This would continue. All roles in school are put in to place to ensure pupils make good progress in their learning. Leadership team values the work of the teaching assistants and knows that they are an important part of the whole team.

How will we get money for school improvements or new developments?

There will be a different funding streams available to the school if it becomes an academy. It will be able to bid for funds in a way that it cannot currently.

Will staff have to reapply for our jobs?

No staff will not need to re-apply for jobs.

Will we be a non-profit organisation?

Yes.

Who will pay for the existing maintenance costs of the current building prior to the new build?

School will pay for any maintenance prior to the school build. This is the same if we were an Academy or LA school.

Will governors be qualified to run a more business oriented operation?

The skills base of the governors would need to be fit for purpose so that the conversion is successful. The governors can be selected for their roles and we would do this to fill any skill gaps.

How do we know standards will rise – too early to assess academies overall?

The Governing Body would not take a decision to convert unless it believed that Academy conversion was in the best interests of pupils.

Could you explain about how the academy will be run? Is it more like a business?

The structure of the governance and trustees would be different. Please refer to the paper 'Academy Discussion Paper – April 25th 2015' which illustrates different types of academies that could be considered.

How would converting to an academy impact on the PTA?

It would not.

What has been the reaction of the staff?

The staff have been consulted prior to the consultation. As one would expect there is a range of views, but the majority are asking questions to learn more about academies and to talk to their peers who already work in academies. We are using this consultation process to give them these opportunities.

What are the actual benefits?

Some of the benefits have been shared on the 'Academy Discussion Paper – April 25th' and as part of the consultation process we are gathering more views of potential benefits and barriers.

What are the timescales if the governors agree to become an academy?

They have not been determined as the decision has not yet been made either way. The Governing Body would determine the timescale of any changes, if this was decided. The earliest conceivable date would be the 1st January 2016, but it could be longer than this.

What is the legal entity if the school becomes an academy?

The legal entity is the Academy Trust which is a company limited by guarantee. This is a type of company that does not have shareholders and cannot pay out dividends.

What happens if the school standards drop below the national requirement?

The Regional Schools Commissioner would intervene and find a sponsor for the school.

Will you still be involved in the Upton cluster of schools?

Yes

How will this impact on the Upton Village Pre-School?

Changing to academy status should not impact on Upton Village Pre-School.

What is the difference between an academy and a free school?

Free schools are schools which will be set up by groups of parents, teachers, charities, trusts, religious and voluntary

groups. They will be set up as academies from the outset and will be funded in the same way - directly from central government.

Academies are publicly funded schools which operate outside of local authority control. The government describes them as independent state-funded schools. Essentially, academies have more freedom than other state schools over their finances, the curriculum, and teachers' pay and conditions.

A key difference is that they are funded directly by central government, instead of receiving their funds via a local authority.