

Consultation on the conversion of Oakington Church of England VA Primary School to an academy, as part of the Diocese of Ely Multi Academy Trust

This document is intended to provide you with information about academies and the Diocese of Ely Multi Academy Trust (DEMAT)

Please note that if the school must convert to become an academy, as in this case, then some of the questions raised are not relevant.

What is an Academy?

Academies are schools directly funded by central government (the Department for Education) rather than by the local authority and are run as not for profit charitable trusts. There are individual academy trusts running only one academy and multi-academy trusts organised to run more than one academy. Each academy trust has their own memoranda and company articles of association. All new schools will follow this model and existing schools are being encouraged to convert to academy status.

What is the Diocese of Ely Multi Academy Trust?

The Diocese of Ely has a long and successful history of involvement in education and schooling. It has 83 Church of England schools in the diocese each with a distinctive identity and ethos where the development of social, spiritual and emotional intelligence is as important as academic achievement. The funding of Church of England schools has since 1902 been the responsibility of local government. The Academies Act of 2010 changed that and enabled any state-maintained school to convert to an academy sponsored by a charitable trust with public funding awarded to the Trust directly by the Secretary of State for Education.

The Diocese of Ely has embraced the opportunity created by the 2010 Act and put in place a Charitable Trust to manage those of its schools that convert to become academies together with any other schools that convert to become academies that want to be part of the Trust. DEMAT now has 36 academies within the Trust with more schools planning to join.

DEMAT is committed to raising standards, enhancing teaching and learning, and is working collaboratively with local authorities, other schools and academies and with partner organisations from the public and private sectors to achieve these aims.

We recognise the many strengths of Oakington Church of England VA Primary School and aim to build on these, where changes are necessary we will work in a way that provides support for those that the change affects to ensure there is no detrimental impact on children's education or pastoral care; in many respects, we expect very little will change in the day-to-day running of the school. The DEMAT has a strong central education shared services team with extensive expertise in school improvement. The team includes a wide



range of professional colleagues with experience and expertise in education, finance, property, legal and HR.

Further information

For those who want more information there are many sources available. The Department for Education website has information and answers to “frequently asked questions” about Academies. It can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/types-of-school/academies>.

The project team working (contact details at the end of this document) on the Oakington Church of England VA Primary School academy conversion are also available to answer questions and contact details are shown at the end of this document. The School staff and the Governing Body will be involved in converting the school to an academy and will also be able to answer your questions or to find answers for you.

The Impact of becoming an Academy

Academy funding

The total funding available for an academy is the same as for a local authority-maintained school. At present, the local authority “top slices” about 12% of the school’s General Annual Grant for the services that it maintains. When the school becomes an academy, the Grant funding is paid to the DEMAT and the Trust will retain about 6% to meet the cost of essential central services costs and pass the rest to the school. This will mean the school receives more devolved funding but because some services now provided by the County will need to be paid for there will be no financial advantage or disadvantage to the school to becoming an academy.

Provision of Services

The academy will need to use some of the additional funding to purchase the services they no longer receive from the local authority. However, the academy and Trust will be able to choose where to source these services. For example, the school could decide what it wanted in terms of services such as the provision of educational psychology, music, visual and performing arts, outdoor education, meals and some of its IT systems. As more schools join the Multi-Academy Trust, there is the potential for savings through procurement of services for the whole group of academies rather than each buying services separately.

Additional Freedom and Responsibility

There are many areas where an academy has greater flexibility in the organisation of its teaching delivery than a maintained local authority school. The increased flexibility provided by direct funding and more autonomy will help the school to deliver the best possible education.

The Trust in conjunction with the local Governing Body will be responsible for determining, which, if any, of these additional freedoms the school should use. They will also be responsible for ensuring that any changes are in the interest of the school and pupils.

The Management Structure of the Academy

The legal entity that will ultimately be responsible for the running of the school will be the DEMAT. This is the body, which will employ the staff and formally appoint the head teacher and the governors but will otherwise delegate staff recruitment and the day to day operation of the school to the local Governing Body, the head teacher and the senior leadership team.

The Local Governing Body will operate in a similar way in that it will follow a Scheme of Delegation provided by DEMAT. The Trust has just started a review of its local governance as a first step in reviewing its governance structure at a strategic and local level, something which has not been done since its formation in 2013.

Questions and Answers

Q 1. What will be the effect on my child?

The whole purpose of becoming an Academy is to improve the education that the school can provide. The best schools are those with the best classroom teachers who inspire and enable children to learn and to want to learn more. The school wants to ensure that it can appoint and develop the best staff, shape and resource the curriculum, facilitate challenging learning in and beyond the classroom, and surpass its previous best in all areas.

Q 2. How would an Academy be accountable?

An academy is governed by company law as a charitable trust. The government will intervene if results fall below their floor targets and OFSTED will inspect if there is any negative change in circumstances or results. The DEMAT Board will be monitoring the school's performance.

Q 3. Will the admissions process remain the same?

Yes. The local authority will continue to manage admissions. If the academy becomes oversubscribed, then any appeal from an admissions decision made by the Local Governing Body will be heard by a committee drawn from the DEMAT Board in much the same way as the local authority does now.

Q 4. How will admission numbers be affected?

The process of becoming an academy has no bearing on admission numbers.

Q 5. How would academy status affect the catchment area?

Becoming an academy does not result in any change to the catchment area. Catchment areas are set by the local authority that continues to have the responsibility for pupil planning, making sure there are enough places in state funded schools and academies for its area.

Q 6. What is the position on the length of school day?

There are currently no plans for changing either the length of day or terms for pupils. No change will be made on either of those issues without consultation with pupils, parents and staff. Central to any judgment that the Trust makes, will be the quality of provision and the best interests of pupils.

Q 7. How would the curriculum change because of a change in status?

An academy must teach the National Curriculum core subjects, which are English, Maths and Science, and must teach Religious Education. Beyond that statutory requirement, academies are free to design their own curriculum. Academies are subject to the same national testing arrangements, so the curriculum they design will inevitably support the subjects, which are to be assessed. Freedom to match the curriculum to the pupils' circumstances, needs and aspirations is a key facet of being an Academy and therefore the curriculum will be under constant review. Where changes are in the pupils' interest, we shall look to introduce these with the support of parents and staff.

Q 8. How will we meet the needs of children who have additional needs?

Pupils will be assessed early and have access to appropriate support to match their individual needs. As with maintained schools' academies employ specialist special education needs staff and procure additional specialist services and equipment tailored to the needs of the individual pupils.

Q 9. Is there any change to the number of Inset (in-service training for staff) days as an Academy?

Academy status has no impact on the number of staff training days each year. The timing of inset days is for the academy to decide but these will be notified in advance and will not be changed at short notice.

Q 10. Who will be responsible for what once a school becomes an Academy?

The Local Authority will provide:

- Home to school transport, including transport for pupils with special educational needs (SEN)

- Education psychology, SEN statements and assessment
- Assigning SEN resources for pupils who require high levels of additional resource (this is a top-up to formula funding under a separate contract with the local authority)
- Monitoring of SEN provision and parent partnerships
- Prosecuting parents for non-attendance • Provision of pupil referral units for a pupil no longer registered at an academy

The academy/Trust will be responsible for:

- SEN support services
- Behaviour support services
- Free School Meals Assessments
- Maternity cover
- Redundancies
- Asset management
- School improvement services
- Education welfare services
- Arts and music services
- Faith ethos

Q 11. Who will provide the services which the school now has to fund?

An academy is free to choose which services to buy and does not have to buy into local authority services even if it has been a regular user of them in the past. For most services, the Local Governing Body in conjunction with the school staff will decide where to buy services from, for some employer related services like insurance, IT systems, Personnel / HR, and audit the services procurement will be through the Trust.

Q 12. Will there have to be additional money spent on administration?

Since academies are independent organisations (run by a charitable trust operating as a limited liability company), there is a need to employ administrators with appropriate business and finance skills. However, this is not significantly different from the current situation. DEMAT is a much smaller organisation than the local authority with a much flatter organisation structure and far narrower responsibilities, it is expected that its education team operating costs when compared to a local authority will be lower.

Q 13. Would the school be allowed to fail financially?

Academies are not allowed to run at a deficit without remedial action. The Trust will closely monitor the budget and provide financial services advice and support should a school fall into unexpected financial difficulties.

Q 14. Does becoming an Academy mean that there will be more funds available for teaching staff and extra- curricular activities?

No, the Government aims to fund academies to the same level as state-maintained schools. When school becomes an academy the net funding it receives is likely to be slightly higher for two reasons, the DEMAT holds back a smaller percentage of funding for the central services it provides and there are some small specific funds paid as part of the overall funding aimed at offsetting some areas of expenditure where academies face higher costs than maintained state schools, such as insurance. In practice, the funding balances out because some of the services previously provided by the local authority should be purchased direct. The benefit of becoming an academy is that the school can decide how most of its funding is spent rather than being tied to services that are paid for through the top slicing of funding by the local authority; the Trust and the local Governing Body will decide how best to spend the grant funding to enhance the education provided.

Q 15. How would building's maintenance be funded?

The school is responsible for the maintenance of its buildings now and this will not change. The Diocese of Ely has a buildings and grounds maintenance services contract in place for its properties and academies will be able to buy into those services as an alternative to those offered by the local authority or procured through the open market. Should any major work be required to the school building, the Trust would apply directly to the DfE for financial support.

Q 16. What changes to the school Uniform or school logo are planned?

No changes will be made without first consulting with parents and guardians of pupils at the school.

Q17. Are there plans to change school meal arrangements or the availability of free school meals?

The Trust plans to put in place free school meal arrangements that are the same as those in the school at the moment. All children who are receiving free school meals when the school becomes an academy will continue to do so without reapplying. The process for new applications will not change and decisions made will be on the same basis as now unless the Government changes the scheme.

Q18. Will becoming an Academy mean that community and groups' use of the School facilities is changed?

The DEMAT is committed to making facilities available to community groups and clubs providing these do not interfere with the education of the pupils.

Q19. Would becoming an academy impact on the school's community involvement?

The principle of community involvement has been incorporated into the Department for Education's model funding agreement, which requires an academy trust to "be at the heart of its community, promoting community cohesion and sharing facilities with other schools and the wider community". This principle of "community cohesion" is central to DEMAT's principles and vision.

Q 20. Who will be responsible for meeting the cost of the changing to an Academy?

The cost of implementation is met by the Government. The Ely Diocese has a team to manage the implementation.

Q 21. If I work in the Academy, will conditions change when the Trust becomes our employer?

Employees automatically transfer from the employment by the 'old school' / Local Authority to the new Academy, under The Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (TUPE).

TUPE protects employees' rights so staff should see no substantive change to their terms and conditions, and if any change were needed it would be subject to full consultation with staff and their representatives. However, for PAYE purposes, HM Revenue & Customs treat the new Academy as a new entity, and therefore a new payroll scheme must be

established with them. This can also mean that all employees receive a P45 from the old payroll scheme, when they become a 'new employee' of the new payroll scheme.

Q 22. Can you guarantee that teaching and non-teaching staff terms and conditions, pay, pensions, occupational health etc. will remain as good as is now provided by the Local Authority?

As before, the school needs to recruit and retain excellent staff. We believe that this is achieved by paying staff at the national rates, providing them with excellent conditions of service and being considerate of their well-being through the services we provide for them. New staff could be appointed under different terms and conditions, if the Trust feels it is in the best interests of the academy, but the Trust will comply with equal pay legislation.

Q 23. Are staff pensions going to be affected negatively?

The Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS) is a National Scheme which is implemented across all types of schools and will remain unchanged under academy status. Non-teaching staff are likely to belong to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). Academies are separate scheme employers under the LGPS. Existing staff who are already members of the TPS or LGPS will not be affected by the conversion. At conversion, all staff will be automatically enrolled in either the TPS or LGPS but would be able to opt out of the scheme if he or she gives notice within three months.

Q 24. Will there be any redundancies?

None are planned as a result of academisation. However around 80% of school and academy funding is spent on staffing and the funding for schools and academies is set by reference to the number of pupils. Changes in pupil numbers can therefore have a considerable impact on the funding and on staff numbers. Academies must operate based on a balanced budget. If, at some point in the future, the academy cannot draw up a balanced budget then costs would have to be cut, and this might impact of the staffing structure. Additionally, over time, the size or specific needs of the school may change, and individual roles may no longer be required. It is therefore never possible to rule out the possibility of future redundancies, however no redundancy could take place without full consultation.

Q 25. What's the new structure of the Governing Body in an Academy?

What will be the role of parents? The Local Governing Body (LGB) of an academy must have a minimum of three Governors but typically will have between 7 and 14 Governors.

There is provision for representation from the Diocese of Ely, the Parochial Church Council, the incumbent and two parents on the local Governing Body. In addition, we normally have two staff representatives. Parent Members are full members of the local Governing Body and share the responsibility for overseeing the effective operation of the academy with all other LGB Members.

Q 26. How strong is the voice of the parents going to be if we are an Academy?

DEMAT believes that working in close partnership with parents is essential to support the achievement and well-being of children. Aside from parent representatives on local governing bodies DEMAT encourages its school to carry out regular consultation with parents. The committees of the DEMAT Board also draw members from the Local Governing Bodies to help strengthen the links between the Board and our schools and provide another opportunity for parental involvement in the Trust's decision making.

Q 27. What will the accountability of local Governing Body members and senior staff be in an Academy?

Personal liability will not arise if local Governing Body members carry out their duty acting in good faith. Academies are required to have governor liability insurance with minimum cover of £10 million, which insures against collective liability of the Governing Body acting in good faith.

Q 28. Would Academy status change the relationship between the head and Governors?

The local Governing Body board members and the head teacher would have a very close working relationship, much in the same way as with the current Governing Body or previous board of governors. The head teacher will be a member of the local Governing Body.

Q 29. Who are the governors and senior staff accountable to if not the Local Authority?

The principles of governance are the same in academies as they are in maintained schools, but accountability will be to the DEMAT.

Q 30. Would Academy status change the nature of the school?

In short, no. Belonging to the DEMAT will strengthen links with the Diocese and the school's nature as Church of England academies will be preserved. The schools will continue to welcome children and families from all faiths and from none.

Q 31. What opportunities are there for working with other schools?

The Academy will work collaboratively with other academies, cluster schools and the wider family of Church of England schools, sharing resources, knowledge and best practice as may be appropriate with the following objectives in mind and supporting each other to:

- Achieve consistently high standards of learning and teaching.
- Develop curriculum design and collaboration, which optimises opportunities for pupil and ensures effective learning, good behaviour and good interpersonal relationships.

Q 32. Who makes the final decision on being an academy?

If the Governing Body decides to go ahead, the Secretary of State at the Department for Education (DfE) will make the final decision.

Q 33. When will the School become an Academy?

If the Governing Body decides to proceed, it is hoped to become an Academy and to join DEMAT on 1 May 2019 – subject to final agreements being in place.

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