



## The Three Saints Academy Trust

### Frequently asked questions about academy conversion

This information is intended to help answer some of the initial questions which may arise when considering conversion to academy status. This information may provide the stimulus for further discussions.

#### **What is an academy?**

An academy is an all-ability school that is directly funded by central government and independent of direct control by local government. Academies are inspected by Ofsted. Academies are self-governing.

#### **What is the main motivation for converting to academy status?**

- National curriculum: Academies do not have to follow the national curriculum as long as the curriculum remains 'broad and balanced'. This will provide greater flexibility to determine what best suits our children.
- Financial budgets: Academies receive funding directly from central government instead of via the local authority. This will include money that would previously have been held back by the local authority. An academy may also accumulate funds from private sources should it choose to.
- Admissions: Academies are responsible for drawing up their own admissions criteria in line with the Admissions Code and SEN Code of Practice (the law). Academies are required to cater for children of all abilities (unless they were already selective).
- Length of terms and school days: Academies are free to set the length of its terms and school days.
- Ability to maintain and improve pay and terms of conditions of staff: The academy is responsible for agreeing levels of pay, conditions of service, staffing structures, career development and appraisal. However, all existing staff transfer from the local authority under legislation known as TUPE regulations which will protect their current conditions.
- Freedom from control of LA.
- Freedom of choice to spend the money that the LA currently spends on our behalf.

#### **What is the purpose of the partnership between the schools in The Three Saints Academy Trust?**

- To support its member academies in enhancing the opportunities and outcomes for their pupils and staff by;
- Developing and sharing best practice in educational teaching, learning, curriculum and outcomes
- Coordinating staff recruitment, professional training and career development to create a skilled, motivated, expert workforce
- Working collaboratively to increase operational efficiency and make optimum use of available resources  
Mutually beneficial and healthy competition between academies

#### **Does the school need agreement from the Local Authority?**

No. The school is free to discuss its plans with any local partners, including the Local Authority; however, the Academies Act 2010 has removed the need for the LA to approve plans of the school. All that is required is a resolution be passed by the Governing Body. Once the Secretary of State has confirmed that the school will become an Academy she will direct the Local Authority to cease to maintain it.

### **Who makes the decision to become an academy?**

The governing body.

### **How long does it take to become an Academy?**

We would expect that the process could take a minimum of six months.

### **Do schools converting need a commercial/business or other Sponsor?**

No. Schools which are converting to Academy status are not required to have any kind of Sponsor, although they are free to work with any external organisation they choose.

### **Is an academy like a business?**

No. A business makes profit for its shareholders. An academy is a charitable trust which cannot make profit.

### **Are academies bound by the same rules and regulations as other schools?**

Academies are required to follow the law and guidance on admissions, special educational needs and exclusions.

### **Will the academy follow the National Curriculum?**

Yes, but it would have more freedom to try different things in the curriculum and make sure that what is taught is relevant to our pupils and their specific needs.

### **Does becoming an academy change the relationship with local schools and the community?**

No. Academy funding agreements state that they must ensure that the school will be at the heart of its community, collaborating and sharing facilities and expertise with other local schools and the wider community.

### **As an academy, will it still work with the local authority (LA)?**

Academies are independent of the local authority. Academies can choose to continue working with the LA.

### **How does governance work?**

The Three Saints Academy Trust has a board of directors who are ultimately responsible for the work of the Trust and the academies in it. We devolve as much responsibility as possible to the individual academies. The Board of Directors is responsible for appointing the majority of the governors on each academy governing body, including the post of Chair of Governors. Each academy has its own governing body who work with the academy Principal to check that the academy is making good progress. Each governing body has parent/carer representatives and a staff governor. All Church of England Schools will have governors representing the Parish Church Council and Diocese. The academy Principal is always a governor for the time they are employed in that role.

The governing body will set the vision for the academy in line with the overall commitment of The Three Saints Academy Trust. The governing body also draft the academy spending plan and improvement plan for approval by The Three Saints Academy Trust.

The governing body has delegated powers from the Trust Board including the management of finance and property and the appointment of staff. The schedule of delegation is the same across each of the academies within the Trust. With the exception of any school in an Ofsted category.

### **How will parents have a say in the schools running and decision making?**

As stated above, each school will have parent representatives on their governing body. Each school will also have an active Parents Forum with class representatives. The parents forum will meet 3 times a year and act as the school's parent consultative body.

### **What will happen to our school's funding?**

The Department for Education meets the running costs for an academy in full. Academy funding is calculated on a like-for-like basis with local authority schools, following the local funding agreement. Therefore the academy will have a similar budget to that of its predecessor maintained school. With greater freedom to procure services from other providers and to realise cost efficiencies across the network, the academy will be able to make more efficient use of resources to support school improvement. Like other schools, an academy cannot run at a loss or agree a deficit budget.

### **How will the school be accountable financially?**

An academy is governed by the rules and regulations for charitable trusts, we will be required to produce and file accounts and trustees cannot be paid. There will be robust systems with an audit conducted by our external independent auditor BDO.

### **How does academy status affect SEN funding?**

SEN funding will come directly from the government through the Education Funding Agency. Funding allocated to a named child would continue to be funded directly by the local authority.

### **Does it cost to become an academy?**

Yes. There are legal costs associated with becoming an academy. The government gives each converting academy £25,000 to contribute towards these costs.

### **Who will own the school building and land?**

The local authority and/or Diocese will be required to grant a 125 year lease to the academy trust.

### **Will the staff stay the same?**

When a school converts from a local authority maintained school to a new academy, all permanent staff are entitled to transfer to it under the same employment terms and conditions.

### **Will the terms of employment for staff change?**

As part of TUPE arrangements, staff are entitled to transfer to the new academy under the same employment terms and conditions. However, it is essential that the academy is able to respond to the changing curriculum requirements and educational demands. This may therefore require consultation with staff and trade unions, once the academy has been established, on changes to terms and conditions of employment. This would be necessary if, for example, the Trust wished to introduce a particular organisational change to the academy's term dates, or if curriculum demands and the need for improved educational outcomes required a different leadership and organisational structure.

### **What will happen with regard to staff pensions?**

If you are a teacher in the current school, your pension will continue as part of the teacher's pension scheme, with the Trust continuing with the same employer responsibilities as the predecessor school. Non-teaching staff will usually be members of the local government pension scheme and the Trust will secure 'admitted body' status with the local pension authority to protect the pension rights of employees and take on employer responsibility, both for contributions and administration of the scheme. Staff can opt out of either if they wish to make alternative provision.

### **What happens if the headteacher leaves?**

The academy trust will work with the academy governors to appoint a new headteacher/principal.

**Will you consult with staff, community and parents?**

Yes, as part of our approach to project management for any new academy, we will consult with all key stakeholder groups during the transition phase. This will include the sharing of our plans for the new academy and an opportunity to gather feedback and suggestions, as well as addressing any questions or concerns. A clear consultation and communications strategy will be agreed with the school.

**Will the Trust recognise and engage with our trade unions?**

Yes. The Three Saints Trust recognises the role of trade unions and sees positive engagement as critical to the transition process and ongoing success of the academy. They will play an important role in the consultation process on TUPE for staff.

**Will there be a new uniform?**

This will be decided on a school-by-school basis. However, no costs will be incurred by parents if a change of uniform is deemed necessary. If the school changes its existing uniform parents should just purchase new uniform as, and when, required.