



Frequently Asked Questions – Academy Status

Our school is consulting with our parents, carers, students, staff, trade unions and local community on the proposals to convert to 'Academy' school status. To learn more about what this will mean for you, your child and the wider community, we have provided over the next few pages, some questions and answers about Academy schools. The closing date for responses is **5pm on Friday 9th October 2015** and details of how to respond are also included.

What are academy schools?

Academies are publicly funded independent schools, free from local authority control.

So what is different?

Academy Schools have additional responsibilities and freedoms that 'maintained' schools do not enjoy. These include:

- Freedom from Local Authority control
- Ability to set pay & conditions for staff
- Freedom from following the National Curriculum
- Ability to change length of term and school days
- Greater control over school budgets
- Freedom to spend the money the Local Authority currently spends on behalf of the school

Why are the Governing Body and Leadership Team of the school considering Academy status?

The Government signalled their desire to see all schools move to academy status to enjoy greater freedom and flexibility in how they can deliver education. Like many other schools both locally and nationally, our school has looked at the benefits and freedoms Academy status can bring and feel it is something we should explore. Stockton is a relatively small local authority and a number of schools in the Borough have already converted to academy status or are in the process of doing so.

Do converting schools need to have a sponsor?

Schools that are performing well such as ours are not required to have a sponsor.

Who will sit on the Academy Trust?

Some of the existing Governors drawn from each school in the partnership are likely to make up a significant number of the people who will sit on the new Trust Board. In addition each school will have a Local Governing Body who will continue to ensure that the needs of each school are monitored closely.

What about working with other schools?

Our school already has very strong partnerships with other local schools. We are therefore very interested in models that allow us to build on these partnerships through academy status. For this reason we are seeking to form a multi academy trust with our partner schools. This will allow us to continue the strong and established partnership we already have, provide better opportunities for our pupils, and save money by sharing some back office services. The Diocese also requires that any schools converting to academy status form a multi academy trust.

Does it mean more money?

Academies are funded in a similar way to other schools but the funding comes from central Government not via the Local Authority. In addition the Academy would also receive its share of the funding which the Local Authority currently receives to pay for Town Hall services. By receiving this funding directly, this will mean that we have choice over which services to buy or not to buy, to meet the needs of our children.

Will admissions arrangements change?

The Academy Trust would be responsible for setting the admissions arrangements for our school. It must be stressed however the admissions criteria must have regard to the national Admissions Code of Practice. The Governing Body has no plans to either increase the number of children admitted to our school, or change the admissions criteria.

When would the school change to become an Academy?

Schools can change to Academy status within 3-4 months of consulting with parents and carers. It is for the Governing Body to decide whether the school should apply for Academy status. In addition the Diocese must also give permission for the school to become an academy and there is a rigorous application process to ensure that the Catholic ethos of any school seeking to become an academy is protected. If we go ahead, we would aim for 1st March 2016.

What does it mean for staff?

All staff would transfer their employment under TUPE legislation from their current employer, the Governing Body, to the new Academy Trust. We are also consulting with our staff to seek their views and offering reassurance that terms and conditions would remain at least the same as an Academy.

How will it affect my child's education?

The conversion to academy status will not mean any changes for pupils; parents and carers, other than the Head Teacher would have more flexibility around protecting our successful curriculum and ensuring that we have high quality support services for all of our children. We will be free to deliver and/or commission our own support for children with additional and special educational needs.

What will happen to the uniform?

The Governing Body does not intend to change the uniform

Will the name of the school change?

The Governing Body does not intend to change the name of the school, although we may need to reflect the fact that we have become an academy. The Governing Body is also strongly committed to retaining the identity of our school within the multi academy trust.

Will the times of the school day and holidays change?

The Governing Body has no plans to change the times of the school day or the terms dates. Any future changes would be subject to extensive consultation with parents and carers.

Are academies still accountable for their performance and are performance targets set?

Like all schools academies are in the first instance accountable to the pupils they serve and their respective parents / carers. Academies still have to meet government performance targets concerning progress of all children across all key stages, and will still be inspected by Ofsted. Although Academies can innovate and change the curriculum, they still must ensure students leave having achieved their full potential across a broad and balanced range of subjects.

What services would remain under the control of the Local Authority?

The Local Authority would still have responsibility for a number of services including:

- Home to school transport
- Assessing pupils needs (SEN)
- Coordinating school admissions
- Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)

Have your say

- Complete the response form
- Attend a drop-in session
- Wider information on the Academies programme is available on the Department for Education website at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/academy-conversion-process>



**St John the Evangelist RC Primary School, Billingham
St Joseph's RC Primary School, Billingham
St Paul's RC Primary School, Billingham**

Academy Consultation Feedback Form

Please let us know your views regarding whether our school should become an Academy and form a Multi Academy Trust with our two partner schools.

Name.....

School which your response refers to.....

Contact details.....

Parent/guardian

Staff

Resident

Other

Your written response should be handed in at the office and marked "Private and Confidential) by no later than **5pm Friday 9th October 2015**.

Thank you for taking the time to respond to the consultation.