

Frequently Asked Questions: Parents and Carers

Why is St Erth School considering becoming an Academy?

The Governors of St Erth School perceive this as being the best way of sustaining our school in the future and keeping its unique identity. In our local area, Pendeen, St Just, St Ives School and Nancledra schools have already recently joined or are joining Truro and Penwith Academy Trust and we see being part of a local group of schools as very important. In addition other schools in our area are now part of different academy groups.

What is an Academy?

Academies are state schools which have the freedom to determine their own policies on such things as the curriculum. This is enabled by the Academies Act 2010. Academies are managed by their own academy trust and receive funding directly from central government.

Who runs an Academy?

The academy is run by an academy trust. This is a legal body which operates as a charitable organisation and a company limited by guarantee. The Trust has a formal agreement with the Department for Education.

My child has Special Educational Needs. How can I be confident that they will be given the same level of support, attention and care?

The Academies Act 2010 requires academies to follow the same statutory framework for Special Needs as Local Authority schools. The School will receive funding for children with statements of Special Educational Needs / Education Health Care Plans in the same way, whether they are academies or Local Authority schools. If children have statements with an enhanced package of support, both types of school will get the same additional funding directly from the Local Authority.

Are there any rules relating to admissions that academies and maintained schools have to follow?

Yes. Academies have to follow the law for school admissions, Special Educational Needs and exclusions as if they were a maintained school. Academies cannot select pupils on the basis of ability.

What inspection regimes and assessment data information do academies have to provide?

All academies are inspected by Ofsted using the same framework and timescales as maintained schools. Academies still have to take part in the same national tests and in teacher assessments of pupils' performance as maintained schools. The results are reported in performance tables in the same way as they are now.

How will the uniqueness of each school be preserved?

The Truro and Penwith Academy Trust is about providing the highest quality teaching and learning opportunities and celebrating the individuality and strengths of each school within the Trust. It is not about making all academies the same. Whilst there will be some things that will be coordinated across the Trust, most academies will be able to operate as they currently do. There is no expectation for uniforms, for example, to change.

What will joining Truro and Penwith Academy Trust mean for children at the school?

- The Curriculum, school identity, finances and day-to-day management of the school will be overseen by the Governors of St Erth School which will have representation of parents of pupils at the school.
- There will be opportunities for them to benefit from the excellent facilities at the Truro and Penwith College sites, e.g. for sport and drama
- Teaching and learning will be enhanced by the staff having support from other good or outstanding schools and their Headteachers.
- The children will benefit from the school being able to access opportunities being created for the Trust schools through its close association with Cornwall Teaching School and Truro and Penwith College.

What autonomy would the school retain?

- The school retains full autonomy over its identity, style, individual distinctiveness, name, uniform, curriculum and finances and all day-to-day running of the school.
- The Governors of the school retain responsibility for curriculum and financial performance of the school. Their responsibilities and accountabilities are clearly set out in a Scheme of Delegated Authority (SODA). The management of the school deploy the staff.

What will school improvement look like - links with other schools? Will there be opportunities to share resourcing?

- All schools in the Trust have a bespoke improvement and development programme specifically geared to their needs
- The programme will have a number of elements including a school to school development framework with Headteacher support and challenge. There will be opportunities for focus groups of key professionals across schools to meet and share good practice, for example in Early Years, Mathematics, English and Special Educational Needs.

Curriculum - will all schools cover the same?

- The Trust firmly believes that the Governors and the management of the school should decide on the curriculum which best suits its children and local community.
- The Trust will not prescribe what to teach, or how to teach it although clearly all schools are expected to respond to statutory guidance on the curriculum.
- The relentless focus of the Trust is on its schools providing the very best curriculum offer for its children and their communities and to aim to achieve the highest possible standards of teaching and school performance.
- The Trust will encourage curriculum innovation and sharing of good practice.