

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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

An academy is a publicly funded independent school. An academy does not have to follow the national curriculum and can set its own term times. It still has to follow the same rules on admissions, special educational needs and exclusions as other state schools. An academy receives money from the Government, not the Local Council. Some academies have sponsors such as businesses, universities, other schools, faith groups or voluntary groups. Sponsors are responsible for improving the performance of their schools.

There are two types of academies:

- Sponsored academies are those normally falling into the Ofsted 'inadequate' category.
- Converter academies are successful schools that have chosen to convert to academies in order to benefit from the increased autonomy academy status brings, having decided that becoming an academy is the best route for the school. Sir Jonathan North would be a converter academy.

### **What is a Multi Academy Trust (MAT)?**

A Multi-Academy Trust is where a number of academies join together and form a single Trust with a Board of Directors (called Trustees) answerable to the Trust's Members. The Members will be three to five individuals, independent of the schools, who will be responsible for ensuring that the MAT stays true to its core role of providing high quality education for the communities it serves. They are the conscience of the Trust, ensuring that the objectives are upheld.

The Trustees have strategic oversight of the Trust, determine its policies, monitor the effectiveness of individual academies, manage central services and report to the Secretary of State. They work with the academies to ensure they are performing well and that they get the support they require. As is the case now, academies in the Trust will have their own local governing body. The Trust is accountable for all its academies.

### **Has the Department for Education or the Local Authority put pressure on Sir Jonathan North to convert?**

No. This is a decision taken by the Governing Body after careful consideration of all available information. Governors believe it represents both the best way to preserve the future of the school and to continue to provide an excellent education for girls in the local area.

### **What does the conversion process involve and how long does it take?**

The conversion process involves:

- Transferring the employment of college staff from the local authority to the Academy Trust in accordance with TUPE.
- Negotiating a commercial transfer agreement for the transfer of assets and contracts of the college from the Local Authority to the Academy Trust.
- Arranging for the MAT to have use of the college's land and buildings, either by way of a 125 year lease with the Local Authority or the transfer of the freehold of the land, as applicable.

A basic start up grant of £ 25,000 is paid to all converters when they are approved in principle to become an academy and can be used to support the process. The key steps a school must take are all explained in the Department for Education's conversion guide.

The length of time to convert varies but is not usually sooner than four months from the start of consultation. A school can change its mind right up to the point where documents are sent to the Secretary of State for signature, which is usually two or three weeks before the planned conversion date.

**If Sir Jonathan North becomes an academy within The Lionheart Academies Trust, how will this affect the structure of the Governing Body?**

The principles and expectations of Governance are the same in academies as in maintained schools.

Each school will have a local Governing Body with parent and staff representation. The local Governing Body manages the academy on behalf of the Trust in line with the Scheme of Delegation approved for each individual academy. As before, Governors will still be expected to ensure that delegated spending is used prudently for the purposes intended.

The Directors of the Trust hold accountability for the performance of the academies to the Secretary of State. Local Governing Bodies are effectively committees of the Trust with delegated powers given to them by the Directors through a Scheme of Delegation.

The Trust promotes the principle of 'supported autonomy' and the Scheme of Delegation reflects the level of support each academy will receive from the Directors and the Trust. It also outlines the delegated powers given to them by the Directors of the Trust. Broadly speaking, a school that is good or outstanding will see little changes.

Ultimately, any school that gets into difficulty faces the risk of being taken over by a MAT. Joining another outstanding, like-minded school as part of Lionheart Academies Trust helps to mitigate against this risk.

**How are academies inspected?**

All academies are inspected by Ofsted using the same framework and timescales for maintained schools. Academies still have to take part in national tests and in teacher assessments of student performance in exactly the same way as they do currently.

**Will the school have to follow the National Curriculum?**

Academies are not required to teach the National Curriculum but rather a broad and balanced one that includes English, Mathematics, Science, Languages and Religious Education and promotes the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students preparing them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.

The Trust encourages its academies to work together more closely to encourage curriculum innovation and the sharing of good practice. It is unlikely that the curriculum will be significantly different.

### **How does the admissions process work for academies?**

As publicly-funded schools, academies must have admission arrangements that clearly set out how children will be admitted, including the criteria that will be applied if there are more applications than available places. Academies, as their own admission authorities, must ensure that the practices and the criteria used to decide the allocation of school places are fair, clear and objective. Academies are required to undertake periodic consultation on their admission arrangements, regularly publish their admission arrangements, and conduct the admission process as a part of a wider local authority process.

Academies are required to comply with the Admissions and Admission Appeals Code of Practice as if they were maintained schools. They are also required to participate in local authority co-ordination of admissions processes and the local authority's Fair Access Protocol. The Trust is responsible for setting up independent Appeal Panels.

Academies are required to comply with any direction from the Secretary of State to admit a student to the academy, or to amend their admission arrangements they had as maintained schools when they become academies. They can only change their admission arrangements following the procedures set out in the Admission Code. Academies are required to provide education for students of different abilities (they may not select students by ability). Academies are required to provide education for students or mainly drawn from the area in which the academy is situated. Academies are not allowed to charge for admission.

As before, because admissions are centrally coordinated by the LA, parents/carers only need to complete one application form (but they can name several schools on it) and, because a single place is offered, places are not tied up by parents holding on to more than one offer. Academies remain part of this process.

### **Will the college day or term change?**

Although academy status would mean the college would have complete autonomy on these decisions, there are no plans at the moment to change these.

### **Will the college name or Dress Code change?**

There are no plans to change the Dress Code as we wish the college to retain its own unique identity and character. However, the college will be known as: 'Sir Jonathan North College'.

### **Will the college have enough money to pay for the services it needs?**

Yes. We will not be financially disadvantaged by a move to academy status and are likely to receive more funding – at least in the short term. Academies receive the same level of funding per student as they would receive from the LA currently, plus additional money to cover the services that are no longer provided for them by the LA. The Government is clear that becoming an academy should not bring about a financial advantage or disadvantage to a school. However, academies have greater freedom on how they use their budgets.

In accordance with the Scheme of Delegation, the college will retain its individual school budget and the local governing body will continue to manage and monitor that budget in line with the college's aims and priorities. The Trust will have oversight of individual budgets and may intervene either on request or where a risk is identified.

### **What capital funding do academies have access to?**

Over the last few years, the amount of capital money received by each maintained school for building and renovation projects has diminished considerably. As Lionheart Academies Trust is now considered an established and successful trust with over 3000 pupils and five schools it will be allocated a portion of the School Condition Allocation and the Healthy Pupils Fund. Each school in the Trust will have the opportunity to make applications to access this funding.

### **Staff**

#### **What happens to pay and conditions including pensions?**

Rules for conversion to academy status mean that Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment (TUPE) regulations apply and all staff will transfer on existing terms and conditions to the academy as the employer. Academies are not bound by the Standard Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document, however, the Lionheart Academies Trust follows these.

#### **What are the statutory requirements with regard to the TUPE process?**

Although there is no statutory obligation, it is best practice to consult staff and their representatives and to allow 30 days for this consultation.

#### **How secure is my Job?**

This is not a cost-cutting exercise. There will be no job losses directly resulting from academisation and forming a MAT. As now, local governing bodies will be responsible, according to their Scheme of Delegation, for appointing staff to their academy and for deciding the staffing structure that best meets the needs of the academy within available budgets.

There may be opportunities for staff to gain more experience by supporting another academy but existing staff will not be compelled to work in other academies within the MAT. We imagine that there will be increased opportunities for professional development within the group of schools.

In all cases the current employer has a statutory obligation to inform employee representatives (ie the recognised union or in the absence of one, elected representatives) of certain matters in writing.

These are:

- The fact that the transfer is to take place
- The date of the transfer and the reasons for it
- The legal, economic and social implications of the transfer for any affected employees and the measures which the employer envisages it will, in connection with the transfer, take in relation to any affected employees or, if it envisages that no measures will be so taken, that fact.

#### **How will it work for new staff?**

New staff may/will be employed by the Trust and therefore could work at more than one academy. It will be made clear on appointment where the main base or bases will be.