



## Academy Conversion

# General Questions and Answers

January 2013 – Version 1

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

An academy is a school that is directly funded by central government (specifically, the Department for Education) and independent of direct control by local government in England, but the latter are responsible for the funding formulae used to allocate funds between sections of education within an authority. An academy may receive additional support from personal or corporate sponsors, either financially or in kind, and must meet the National Curriculum core subject requirements and are subject to inspection by Ofsted.

Academies are self-governing and most are constituted as registered charities or operated by other educational charities.

Under the last Labour government, under performing schools became academies to help with the improvement process. Under the current Government, good performing schools can elect to be 'self converting academies' in order to benefit from the advantages academy status brings.

### **Who can become a self converting academy?**

Primary and secondary schools that have been rated outstanding or good with outstanding features by Ofsted can submit their individual applications to become a self elected Academy.

In addition, any school – primary or secondary – can apply with other schools as part of a formal partnership, providing at least one is rated outstanding or good with outstanding features, or they join an existing

academy trust with a proven track record of school improvement.

### **Does the school need agreement from the local authority?**

The school will be 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 your plans. All that will be required is a resolution passed by the governing body. Once the Secretary of State has confirmed that the school will become an academy, subject to the successful passage of the Academies Bill, he will direct the local authority to cease to maintain it.

### **Do schools need to consult before converting?**

Yes. All schools are required to carry out a consultation but it is up to them to decide whom and how to consult. There is no specified length of time for the consultation and schools have flexibility in how it is conducted. However, consultation must be meaningful

### **What will the responsibilities of the governing body be in the Academy?**

The governing body will be responsible for establishing the academy trust. The academy trust (a charitable company limited by guarantee) will then enter into a funding agreement with the Secretary of State for the running of the academy. The academy trust (made up of members) has a strategic role in running the academy and will be responsible for appointing the governors (also known as directors or trustees) to the governing body of the academy. It is the governing body that manages the academy on behalf of the

members of the academy trust. The key responsibilities are to

- ensure the quality of educational provision
- challenge and monitor the performance of the academy
- manage the academy trust's finances and property
- employ staff.

It will be for the members of the governing body of the school to decide and agree, in discussion with the Secretary of State, who among them would wish to be members of the academy trust and which of them would wish to be governors of the academy trust (note that it is possible to be both a member and governor).

#### **What does the conversion process involve?**

The conversion process has been made as simple as possible for all schools. The key steps the school must take are all explained in the Department's conversion guide and may differ according to the type of school and who owns the buildings and land.

As a minimum, all schools converting must:

- establish their trust as a company by registering with Companies House;
- establish a new bank account for the trust to ensure that the academy will be able to receive funding;
- transfer, renew or procure new contacts, service level agreements and licences and purchase insurance as appropriate.

#### **How long will it take?**

Most schools are expected to be able to convert in around three months.

#### **Can a school withdraw from the conversion process?**

Schools are able to withdraw right up until the point that they sign the funding agreement. Once this is signed there is a legally binding agreement between the Secretary of State and the academy, and the

termination would require a long notice period (seven years).

## **ADMISSIONS**

#### **What are the admission requirements for schools converting to become academies?**

Schools converting to become an academy will be able to retain the admission criteria they currently use. These arrangements and related processes should at all times comply with the School Admissions Code.

When a school becomes an academy, the academy trust will become the admission authority.

#### **Would academies be part of coordinated admissions with the LA?**

Yes, all academies continue to be within coordination i.e. the process for allocating school places to children. This means that parents/carers only need to complete one application form (but they can name several schools on it). Parents/carers will be given an offer of a single school place. Using secondary coordination as an example, parents will apply to the LA on 31 October. The LA will send a list of applicants to the schools by a date agreed in the locally agreed coordination scheme (this is owned by the LA who agrees it with all its schools). The schools then rank the applicants against their oversubscription criteria, and send a ranked list back to the LA. The LA then coordinates admissions across its schools and with neighbouring authorities and offers parents their highest available preference on 1 March.

#### **Will academies have to be a part of the in-year coordinated admissions scheme? e.g. when the LA needs to find places for families that have relocated to the area, etc.**

Academy funding agreements require them to be within local coordination. That means that although the school will apply its admission arrangements, the LA will send out offers. Academies are also required through

their funding agreements to participate in in-year fair access protocols.

**Will LAs still have the responsibility for planning for additional places when there is a growth in student numbers within an area?**

Local authorities will still have overall responsibility for ensuring that there are

sufficient places to meet demand locally. Where individual academies make a request to the Secretary of State to expand their pupil numbers and/or age range, this will only be done following local consultation. The decision taken will be informed by the views of the LA, as the commissioner of pupil places.

We would suggest the following websites are a good source of information regarding academies and conversion.

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/academies/special/steps>

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/academies/special/faqs/a00205221/conversion-process>

<http://academymatters.co.uk/>

The school currently has vacancies for **parent governors**. The benefits of being a governor include:

The opportunity to develop new skills and strengthens existing ones

The chance to be an active member of your local community

The prospect of working as part of a team with a wide range of people

The opportunity to undertake training

The chance to see the wider picture of education

A school's governing body is a balanced representation of the school and the community that it serves and is therefore made up of that school and community.

If you would like to know more about being a parent governor, please drop an e-mail or a message to the School Office ([charville@hillingdongrid.org](mailto:charville@hillingdongrid.org)) and we will pass it to the Clerk to the Governors.