



## **PROPOSAL TO CONVERT TO ACADEMY – MULTI ACADEMY STATUS – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **Ethos**

Each school will continue to have the same unique identity and character as it does now.

### **What is an Academy?**

Academies are state maintained schools free to all children. They are run separately from the local authority, and have an agreement with the Government which provides funding directly to the Academy Trust. They have to follow the same rules as all other state-funded schools over admissions, pupils with Special Educational Needs and exclusions. They are still inspected by Ofsted.

### **What is a Multi Academy Trust?**

A Multi Academy Trust is a company established to be responsible for a number of Academies. Each Academy remains a separate school, but the governors are responsible to a board of directors established for the Trust as a whole. This model is becoming more common and the Government is encouraging primary schools to choose this route.

### **So why make the change?**

There are many reasons why we have decided to consider conversion to Academy. These include:

- Central to our proposed conversion will be that we remain committed first and foremost to meeting the need of children and families within Whiston Community.
- Academy status gives us some more freedom to make decisions about how we can best continue to move the school forward and how best we can use the funding we receive to improve opportunities for our pupils.
- Working within the Wade Deacon Trust Multi Academy Trust, we will be able to strengthen the existing good relationship between our schools and further develop good practice across the Trust.
- Greater freedom in developing a school curriculum to ensure that it is personalised to the needs of our students, to ensure that they are inspired and motivated to achieve.
- Funding will come directly from central government, not through the local authority; this will give us greater freedom to spend our money where we think it will most benefit our children.
- We will have the opportunity to bid for capital money to further improve our school environment.
- By converting to Academy now, we are able to choose any future partner school who we want to work with and economies of scale mean that, together, we can negotiate contracts and services that represent better value for money.
- We will continue to work closely with Knowsley Borough Council and Academy status will not affect the high level of engagement and collaboration that currently exists between partners



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## **When will these changes take place?**

We hope to be able to complete the process of conversion no later than Spring 2018.

## **Curriculum**

Academies are required to have a broad and balanced curriculum which promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils and prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life. For pupils below Key Stage 1 (i.e. reception and nursery), academies are required to follow the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

The curriculum must include:

- English, mathematics and science;
- Religious Education, although the nature of this will depend on whether the school has a faith designation;
- Access to independent, impartial careers advice for pupils in years 9-11; and
- Sex and relationship education (SRE).

Academies are required to take part in the same pupil assessment arrangements and to report on the achievement and attainment of pupils in the same way as all other state-funded schools.

## **Inspection**

Academies continue to be subject to Ofsted inspections.

## **Staffing**

The regulations that place requirements on maintained schools do not directly apply to academies. General employment law applies to academies in the same way as to other organisations. The Academy Trust has responsibility for setting pay and conditions. Teachers must be suitably qualified. The Wade Deacon Trust has no plans to change staff terms and conditions,

All teachers employed at an academy will have access to the Teachers Pensions Scheme and all other employees at an academy must have access to the Local Government Pension Scheme.

## **Attendance**

Academies have considerable freedoms over the length of the school day and term – but there are no plans for us to change that.

## **Funding**

The academy trust will be funded by the Secretary of State as follows:

### ***Recurrent expenditure***

General Annual Grant (GAG) - the equivalent to that which would be received by a maintained school taking account of the number of pupils at the academy.

### ***Financial monitoring***

The academy trust must abide by the requirements of and have regard to the guidance in the Academies Financial Handbook.



## **What financial rules does an academy have to follow?**

It must follow the Academies Financial Handbook. The Academies Financial Handbook sets out the financial requirements for academy trusts (ATs). The Handbook, together with the funding agreement (of which this document forms part), sets out the financial relationship between the Education Funding Agency (EFA) and ATs. The Handbook covers all of the requirements under the financial accountability system for ATs. It sets out all of the areas of HM Treasury's "Managing Public Money" that directly apply to ATs and so all references to "Managing Public Money" are to provide further explanation and clarification of these areas.

This includes the identification of the Head Teacher as the Accounting Officer, who is personally responsible to the governing body for ensuring regularity and propriety;

## **SEN**

Academies should be fully inclusive local schools and in common with all other schools have a clear legal duty to do their best to meet the needs of children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities.

## **Admissions**

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 are required to provide education for pupils of different abilities (i.e. they may not select pupils by ability.) Academies are normally required to provide education for pupils mainly drawn from the area in which the academy is situated.

## **Converting as a group**

Schools can convert together or as part of or seek to join an existing multi-academy trust, which allows them to share staff and expertise, and make savings when buying goods and services.

## **G o v e r n a n c e**

All academies in a MAT are governed by one trust and a single board of Trustees. The Wade Deacon Trust has a protocol to establish a local governing body and or stakeholder groups for each of its academies, to which it can delegate functions. Wade Deacon Trust wish to provide the appropriate support to enable successful performance from all our academy schools but we recognize that each school's individual journey to success will differ based on its context. Consequently, we will encourage diversity of approach and will allow school governing bodies the autonomy to manage in the best interests of their community, unless schools fall within a category that requires more direct intervention.

## **The conversion process**

The conversion process includes a number of elements. All schools must consult stakeholders; the Academy Trust must be established and funding agreements drafted and agreed with the Secretary of State; staff must be transferred from their current employer to the Academy Trust and their terms and conditions – including pensions - are protected in the process; arrangements must be made for the Academy Trust to have the right to occupy the school site and buildings; contracts must be transferred from schools to the Academy Trust; and new insurance arrangements are required together with new bank accounts and auditors. A grant from the DfE will support the costs incurred.



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## **What will the relationship be with the Local Authority?**

Each of our academies have an excellent long standing working relationship with their local authority. The Trust and Local Governing Body will continue to foster positive working relations with the Local Authority. It is likely the school will continue to purchase some services offered by the local authority in the future.

## **Who deals with complaints about schools that have converted to academy status?**

Parents or carers who have a complaint about their son or daughter's academy school would need to contact the school directly in the first instance each school and the Trust will have a well-established complaints procedure and we would expect this procedure to continue if the school becomes an academy.

## **Some questions you may already have.**

- Is this the right time to consider converting to an Academy?

*Yes. School Leaders and Governors have been considering this possibility for some time and as a good school we have been eligible to convert to academy if and when we chose to do so. We judge it to be a good time to convert so we can further develop to improve to outstanding provision. Some schools judged 'inadequate' are forced to join an Academy Chain. We are therefore in a totally different situation to them. As Governors and Senior staff, we must consider the option to convert as part of our duty to safeguard and improve the quality of education we can provide for our pupils.*

- Has the decision to convert to an Academy already been made?

*No. Until the stakeholder engagement has been completed and everyone's views have been obtained a decision will not be made. Both the Governing Body and the Wade Deacon Trust has to weigh up the pros and cons of Academy conversion, taking into account the views of all stakeholders, including staff, Pupils, students, parents, partner schools and local community groups.*

- Would there be any changes to the admissions policy/criteria?

*There are no initial plans to change the school's admission policy requests for places will still be processed by the Local Authority. However, the school will be responsible for its own admissions policy and any proposed changes would be consulted upon in the appropriate manner*

- Would the name of the school change?

*The Governing Body will discuss and reach a decision on this matter.*

- Would the school uniform change?

*There are no plans for any significant changes to uniform but we will review items including school badge and any changes would be carried out in a planned manner over an appropriate timescale.*



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- Would the term and holiday dates or the timings of the school day change?

*No. We would still continue to broadly use the term dates published for Merseyside schools. There are no plans to change the school day.*

- What about the Governing Body

*A local Governing Body would be appointed by the Trust in consultation with the existing Governing Body. Who will continue to undertake the role of monitoring and support school leaders.*

- What about the staff?

*At present, all staff are employed by the Local Authority. If the School does become an Academy, all staff will automatically transfer to the Trust, on their current pay and conditions. All new staff would be employed under current national pay and conditions agreements.*

## **How can I find out more?**

There will be an opportunity for you to come and hear more about the proposal and to ask questions on:

**Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> September 2017 at 9.15am (school hall)**

**Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> September 2017 at 3.20pm (school hall)**

If you have any questions or comments about this proposal please email us on [whistonwillis.de@knowsley.gov.uk](mailto:whistonwillis.de@knowsley.gov.uk) at or send a letter marked "Academy Consultation" to your child's school by 3.30pm on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> October 2017.

**The Department of Education website is a very good source of information relating to academies. [www.education.gov.uk/academies](http://www.education.gov.uk/academies)**