



ACADEMY STATUS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why convert to Academy status?

Please read through the Consultation for the answer to this question. The schools governors believe that conversion to an academy is inevitable for all primary schools in the long term. The opportunity to join a Multi Academy Trust, with schools that we already work closely with, is a good one.

Why join a MAT, rather than become a stand-alone Academy?

Current legislation means that Primary schools that wish to become an Academy need to join together with other schools to form a group, or Multi Academy Trust. Wimboldsley Primary School feels that there will be positive benefits to joining together with these schools such as; sharing management and leadership responsibilities; sharing administrative costs; increased opportunities for teacher training and sharing best practice.

Will the change to academy status mean increased pay for school leaders?

No. The governing bodies and trust are responsible for setting pay ranges for all staff, including leaders, and will maintain the current structure in line with Teachers pay and condition document statutory guidance. The trust also has a duty to run the school on a financially sound basis.

Will the school name or uniform change?

No. We are Wimboldsley Primary School and will proudly keep our name and the current uniform.

How will academy conversion affect staff and staffing?

The school wishes to keep its staff on the same basis of pay and employment conditions for the long term. No part of the proposed conversion is aimed at cutting costs in relation to staffing or otherwise. A benefit of joining the MAT will be better provision of training and development of staff across all the schools, and more flexible staffing opportunities within the MAT. The school values its staff, who provide such an excellent level of education and care for our children.

Will staffing levels change?

Moving to Academy status will not dictate the number or make-up of staff. Decisions on staffing depend on need as well as the resources available. The school may need to increase administrative staff to help manage the increased financial and other responsibilities that will be taken over from the local authority. However, these costs will be shared with the other schools in the group.

Will the school reduce costs by recruiting unqualified teachers, as some academies have done?

We will continue to recruit only qualified staff as class teachers. Some part time staff will continue to provide expert tuition in areas such as sport and these people, as now, may not have a formal teaching qualification.

Will the Terms and Conditions of staff change?

There is no intention to change Terms and Conditions. Staff would officially be employed by the Multi Academy Trust and their existing employment rights would move across under the TUPE rules and thus be protected.



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Are we going to be part of a chain?

Many primary schools have been “taken over” by large corporate Academy “chains”. This is **not** the situation with our proposed Multi Academy Trust. The school will remain as autonomous as possible and retain its individual ethos and character. We will work together with our partner schools, but this has been happening for some time already. It is the intention that our group will remain small, and run for the benefit of our children.

As a partnership of schools will you have increased purchasing power?

Yes, a group of schools should be able to obtain better value when negotiating contracts for services essential for running a school, such as insurance, accountancy, HR, Payroll, broadband and other internet and IT services.

Would our school’s budget be used to bail out a new MAT member school if it was in financial trouble?

No and no decision will ever be taken that might jeopardise that. All schools within the MAT will have their own budget “ring-fenced” and money cannot be moved around between schools. If another school joined the partnership, they would only do so if their financial position was sound.

Funding for Special Educational Needs (SEN) is not currently ring-fenced. How does converting to an Academy affect that?

Converting to Academy status does not, of itself, mean there will be changes to the arrangements for supporting SEN pupils. Whether we convert or not, there has been changes to the funding schools receive for each SEN child. These changes have necessitated a very flexible use of the resources to ensure we continue to support fully those children, whatever form the additional support needs to take. School expects that joining a MAT will improve provision for our children with special needs because expertise and best practice can be shared between schools.

Will you be introducing any new charges?

No. There is no intention to charge in the future for anything that is currently free.

How will the money raised by the FOW’s be used?

Wimboldsley Primary School will continue to have its own autonomous Parent Teacher Association (PTA), the FOW’s, although they will be free to collaborate with other PTAs if they wish. The money raised by each school’s PTA will only be used for its own school. FOW’s is independent of the school, raising money for agreed resources or projects that have been asked for by the schools leadership.

Will there be any change to the admissions policy?

We intend to keep with the current arrangements which are determined by the local authority. That means being very inclusive, welcoming all children in our community, and giving preferential admission to siblings.

Will there be more exclusions as an Academy?

No. Academies have to follow the same government guidance and law on excluding pupils. This includes reporting exclusions to the Local Authority.



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Will the curriculum change?

We currently teach to the National Curriculum (last amended September 2015). Our main consideration is to continue with a 'broad and balanced' curriculum that helps us instil in children a lifelong love of learning.

Will the term dates change?

No. We currently work with our cluster schools and the local high school to try and provide term dates that suit both the needs of our children and parents. There is no intention to alter the current arrangements.

Will a parent's right to complain be affected?

No. If Academy conversion takes place there will be, as there is now, a complaints policy which gives an avenue for parents to complain. Every outside agency currently available to parents will remain unchanged.

Governance structure

The proposed governance structure follows a standard model recommended by the Department for Education. Essentially there is a pyramid of responsibility. At the top will be a limited number of Trustees (or members) who will "own" the group (though it will not have any monetary value). The Trustees will not have any role in the day to day running of the group but will meet once a term to look at the accounts and receive reports about the schools. The actual practical management of the MAT will rest with the Trust Board. These will be Head Teachers, experienced governors, and other individuals who have special skills that will enhance the managing Board. Then each school will have a Governing Body, as now, who will support the school leadership team and hold them to account for the performance of the school.

What are the estimated costs of conversion?

We don't yet know this for certain but the DfE pays a flat-rate grant of £25,000 to a school after an Academy Order has been issued and this is expected to more than meet the costs of conversion. In exceptional circumstances support above this level may be agreed. To reduce potential legal costs the DfE has produced model legal documentation. We intend to contract a third party project manager who has in the recent past conducted approximately a hundred successful Academy conversions, twenty of which have been in Cheshire.

Why William Stockton, Comberbach and Elton?

Over the last two years the school has formed links with Comberbach and Elton and has been working competently with William Stockton for nearly four years. Each share similar outlooks and ambitions for the future. This mutual association has already allowed the forging of links which have been sanctioned by the board. One example is that the school has left the local authority's financial administration service, and the schools employ a part time accountant who oversees the financial management of the group. The Heads also meet regularly to plan training; to look at new initiatives in primary education; and to discuss and agree best practice in the running of their schools. The governing bodies of the schools have started to work alongside each other and have a shared vision for the future of each of the individual schools.