

Academies: Questions and Answers

Q: How will this change our children's experience at school?

This is a change to ownership and governance, not to the ethos or direction of the school. Many things won't change: school term dates, schools hours, break times, school meals, school uniform, contacts with parents.

Q: Will the curriculum change?

Academies do not have to follow the National Curriculum but we do not envisage making any changes to what we do, which of course we continue to develop and improve each year.

Q: What about staff currently at the school?

They are being consulted and their concerns addressed. Formally all staff transfer [TUPE] from being LB Waltham Forest employees to being employees of the new Academy. This puts them in the same position as working for a Voluntary Aided [usually church] school. Our governors have said they will not change terms & conditions of employment for anyone. Pension rights also transfer and the same pension schemes continue to apply

Q: Will staff leave? Will it be harder to recruit?

We believe and expect that becoming an academy will make it easier for us to recruit and retain good staff at all levels at Larkswood.

Q: Will the school have more money to improve education for my children?

Academies get the same basic funding as maintained schools. Our share of the money used by Waltham Forest to provide specific central services will be passed over to us. Larkswood is a very well run school financially and we are confident that we can manage these extra service areas: for example, admissions appeals, extra health & safety responsibilities, legal service, school improvement, etc. There are services we 'buy in' and we will still be able to do this.

Q What about admissions?

The school becomes a separate admissions authority and has some extra admin tasks, but would continue to recruit pupils through the present system managed by the LA

Q: What about pupils' special needs?

LA's statutory responsibilities are unchanged and academies have the same responsibilities as maintained schools for pupils with SEN. No change.

Q What extra duties and responsibilities will the school have to meet?

Academy governing bodies are the direct employer of staff, have direct health and safety



responsibilities, are the school's admission authority and responsible for ensuring the school undergoes an annual external financial audit.

The formal structure is a charitable trust, receiving grants direct from the government. There are additional duties to manage these finances competently, to have them externally audited and to file accounts.

Q: What about the changeover process?

If we decide to apply for academy status, we will require legal advice in relation to setting up the academy trust, negotiating the funding agreement (although there is a standard template available, along with model articles of association and memorandum of understanding) and transferring land. The DfE provides a grant of £25,000 to support the costs of conversion to academy status. This grant does not become available until the Secretary of State has signed an Academy Order. This only happens after the school has formally applied for academy status (i.e. after the governing body has taken a resolution to do so). If we did not spend the full £25k on legal costs, we would be entitled to keep the remainder of the grant.

Q: What about our PFI building?

The legal contracts can be renegotiated to include the fact that Larkswood has become an academy, and we have investigated this. We would not be the first school to make the change and the process is not new. The LA would continue to make the same payments to us to cover the PFI repayment costs. The DfE have separate capital funds we could bid for to add to or improve our buildings.

Q: How will the school's governance change as an Academy?

The principles of governance are the same at an academy as at a maintained school. However the difference is that all academies are charitable companies and as such have a trust body. The trust body is the over-arching accountable body and may have the ability to appoint the majority of the governing body. The respective responsibilities of the top-level trust body and the school-level governing body need to be set out in the articles of association.

Q: If the school converts to academy status and then changes its mind can it convert back again?

No, the Act stipulates that you sign an agreement for at least seven years. Although there are mechanisms to allow for early termination of the funding agreement this would not result in the school reverting to its original status. An early termination is usually indicative that the Secretary of State does not think the academy trust is managing the academy well and he has the power to place the school in the hands of another trust which he considers to be more effective

Q: Does Ofsted also inspect academies?

Yes. No change

Q: Are there other local schools that are already academies?



Yes, the following schools are Academies: Barclay Primary, Chapel End Juniors Chingford Hall, Chingford Secondary School, Highams Park, Hillyfield Primary, Roger Ascham, Rush Croft, Sybourn, Woodside, Thomas Gamuel, Whittingham, Willow Brook and Yardley

