

Academy status – What it would mean for Wharncliffe Side Primary School?

1. What is an Academy?

An academy is a state-funded school that is independent of the local authority, that is required to follow the same regulations and serve its community in the same way as other state-funded schools.

An academy is established by a formal funding agreement (or contract) agreed between the school's Governing Board and the Department for Education (DfE).

1. What is the Government's Academies programme?

The Government says that it wants all schools to become academies over the next few years, and is encouraging schools to become academies as part of a group of schools working together in partnership.

Any school that is performing well (as assessed by DfE) may apply to become an academy; plus any school can apply as part of a group of schools where at least one is good with outstanding features.

2. What are the benefits of Academy status?

Our discussions and research so far indicate that it would be beneficial to establish a Multi Academy Trust with partner schools for the following reasons:

- **Deeper Partnership working and innovation within Teaching and Learning** – we already work well as a group of schools and it is a natural step to pursue deeper links. An Academy Trust would better facilitate the sharing of good practice and expertise, as well as provide different career development opportunities for our staff.
- **Resource Sharing** – we would be able to achieve economies of scale over time, saving much needed money during the current challenging financial climate. Individually, we are not well funded schools and need a way to mitigate external financial pressures in order to keep jobs safe and ensure money is available for learning activities, both of which ultimately impact on the provision for our children.
- **Curricular Freedom** – Academies are free to better alter the curriculum to meet the needs of their pupils. This fits with our shared ethos of providing an engaging and stimulating curriculum.

3. Are there any disadvantages of Academy status?

In the short term, a decision to convert creates extra work for the Headteacher and this could affect their availability until the legal conversion process is completed.

We have identified some disadvantages to joining a larger chain of Academies, but believe these would be mitigated by forming our own local Trust.

4. Would the character of Wharncliffe Side Primary School change?

There would be no changes to the school's name or logos, and the school would not need to use the word academy. Whether or not Wharncliffe Side Primary School becomes an academy it would continue to operate as an inclusive school, at the heart of our local



Academy status – What it would mean for Wharncliffe Side Primary School?

community, providing high quality education for local children of all abilities and maintaining our high profile in the local community, working with other schools and community groups. Since we are proposing creating our own Multi Academy Trust, the values and ethos of the Trust are in line with our own and so a local approach would allow us to maintain our community focussed approach while enhancing our provision through closer working partnership with the other Academies.

5. How will Academy status impact on admissions?

If Wharncliffe Side Primary School becomes an academy there would be no changes to the school's admissions criteria – the same pupils would come to Wharncliffe Side Primary School as would come if it were not an academy. Each academy will manage its own admissions process and must abide by the Admissions Code and participate in the coordination of place planning with the local authority. An academy cannot introduce selection unless it is already part of its admissions criteria.

6. Will Academy status have an impact on inclusion?

The responsibilities of an academy towards students with special needs would remain the same as for a LA maintained school. If Wharncliffe Side Primary School becomes an academy its commitment to all students including those with special education needs would continue; the specialist SEN facilities at Wharncliffe Side Primary School and its inclusive nature defines the school.

7. Will Academy status have an impact on exclusions?

As an academy, Wharncliffe Side Primary School would have to follow the law and guidance on exclusions in the same way it does now; but it would not have to consult the local authority before deciding to exclude a pupil and could arrange its own independent appeals panel.

8. How will Academy status affect funding?

Academies should receive the same level of per-pupil funding as a maintained school, but will have greater freedom in how the budget is used. If Wharncliffe Side Primary School becomes an academy it would receive an additional grant equal to the sum of money currently 'top sliced' from the education budget by the local authority to provide services to the school. As an academy it could choose to buy some or all of these services from the local authority; or it could choose to provide or buy in some of these services from elsewhere and to vary the detail of the services based on the school's needs. The school may be able to secure better value for money and free up money to use for the school's own priorities. The reality is that all schools, regardless of whether they are academies or not, face reductions in funding in the coming years. The additional money that Wharncliffe Side Primary School would receive as an academy would help to offset this reduction and could help to preserve the curriculum and services that Wharncliffe Side Primary School provides for its students and safeguard jobs.

9. What happens to the land and buildings?



Academy status – What it would mean for Wharncliffe Side Primary School?

If Wharncliffe Side Primary School becomes an academy the land and buildings currently used by the school would continue to be available to it under the current arrangements and would transfer to the academy trust on a long lease.

10. Will Academy status affect staff pay and conditions?

If a school becomes an academy, then the academy trust becomes the employer of the staff, not the local authority. All current staff would transfer to the academy under TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment) regulations, retaining current pay and conditions. Although the academy trust would have freedom to determine staff pay and conditions, we are committed to maintaining the current, nationally agreed pay and conditions for teaching staff and the Sheffield City Council conditions for support staff whilst these arrangements continue to exist. These would apply to both existing staff and new appointments. Teachers would remain in the Teachers' Pension Scheme and support staff would remain in the Local Government Pension Scheme as they are now; the employers' contributions would be maintained by the academy.

11. Who runs an Academy Trust?

An Academy Trust is a charitable company responsible for the running of the Academies and has control over the land and other assets. It has a strategic role in running the Academies, but delegates management of the schools to the Governors.

When the trust is established, the signatories to the memorandum are the first members of the trust (usually there will be between three and five members). The role of members is significant, as they act as the guardians of the governance of the trust. They are responsible for agreeing the trust's first articles of association and approving any future changes. They are usually able to appoint a number of the Directors.

The board of Directors (also known as Trustees) is the accountable body of the trust, and is responsible for the conduct and standards of all the schools within it. The board must fulfil the following three core governance functions, as described in the Governance Handbook:

- Ensure clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction.
- Hold the executive to account for the educational performance of the schools and their pupils, and the performance management of staff.
- Oversee the financial performance of the trust and make sure its money is well spent.

12. What will the responsibilities of the Governing Board be?

The Governing Board 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. It is the Governing Board that manages the Academy on behalf 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.



Academy status – What it would mean for Wharncliffe Side Primary School?

13. What are the rules around membership of an Academy Trust, including numbers, make-up, and selection process?

The existing Governing Board, foundation body or trust will agree to join the Academy Trust, which will then re-appoint the Governing Board. The Board of Directors is skills based (of which a Headteacher Board is a sub-committee) which is overseen by the Trust Members. Although there is no limit, it is expected that the Members Board will comprise five people, and the Directors Board will comprise eight. Each Governing Board will retain the make up of the predecessor school.

Further information about the consideration of academy status can be found at:

www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/academies



Academy status – What it would mean for Wharncliffe Side Primary School?

Your opinion is important.

If you have any comments to make or questions which have not been answered, please complete the form below and return/post to the School Office.

Name: (optional)

Relationship to School: STAFF PARENT OTHER _____

Comment/Question:

Your comments/questions should be returned no later than 9am on Friday 10th November 2017.

