

Academy status – Parent FAQs

1. Would you elaborate on the potential disadvantages of the proposal as there weren't any listed in the original FAQ?

We have identified lots of disadvantages to joining a larger or established Multi-Academy Trust such as a potential loss of autonomy but have not identified any to do with forming our own Trust. This is because, as Founding Schools, we would be directly involved in setting the Articles of Association, which is where our values would be enshrined in the legal articles of the Trust.

There are external risk factors that would apply as a school or academy that we need to be aware of, however. The current approach to school funding by central government is always a concern, but we believe that a change to academy status would help mitigate this – although we cannot predict how the government will deal with its historic poor funding of Sheffield schools.

If we did uncover any disadvantages at any point, it could be that the conversion would not go ahead – but we haven't found any as of writing this FAQ.

2. What resources would be shared?

Staff expertise would be shared for the benefit of all across the Trust. This would take the form of sharing best practice at all levels and allow greater collaboration on a number of education issues.

We would also share resources to enable school to school support on school improvement issues. Within the group we have a number of accredited individuals including National, Local and Specialist Leaders of Education and Governance who are available to work alongside other schools if needed and also many other talented staff.

We would also pool some funding to negotiate better deals on some contracted services when we agree that it is in everyone's interest to do so.

It's also possible that we could create new posts across the Trust to deliver some of those contracted services 'in house'.

3. How much effort will be wasted on local negotiations compared to national agreements in terms of staff pay?

None. We would adhere to local and national agreements and so would not need to negotiate locally in this way. It's morally important that our fantastic staff aren't disadvantaged in any way and this is why we intend to maintain pay and conditions.

4. Who will make up the Academy Trust? What is the expertise of the Directors Board?



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Academies have the legal status of companies and are also charitable trusts. This means trustees have the responsibilities of both company directors and charity trustees. They must have the best interests of the academy uppermost in their minds at all times, and have a duty of compliance, ensuring all relevant laws and regulations are followed. As holders of a public office, trustees should also be aware of the Nolan principles of public life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

Like all company directors and charity trustees, academy trustees must be autonomous in their decision-making and avoid conflicts of interest. For example, if they are connected to another organisation in the local community, such as a business, their decisions as a trustee must be made independently.

As a result, our Directors and Members will be highly qualified and skilled individuals that have a track record of success. We are currently recruiting for Directors and Members and would be able to provide further information at a later date if the Trust goes ahead, but broadly the areas of expertise would cover at least Governance, Business, Human Resources, Legal, Financial and Asset Management.

The DfE will assess all proposed directors of the Trust to ensure that they meet the very high standards expected of people holding such important positions.

5. Are Academies still inspected by Ofsted?

Yes.

6. Do Academies still have to administer SATs?

Yes (unfortunately!).

7. Will Trust Financial information be scrutinised?

Yes. Internally by the Directors who would receive reports from Chartered Accountants (the accountancy and audit services include an audit of the Teachers Pension certificate, the production of year end accounts and the Academy Accounts Return). Externally, accounts have to be submitted to the Department of Education who will also scrutinise them to ensure that proper financial management is being carried out. As a company limited by Guarantee, the Trust will also publish its annual report and financial statements to Companies House each year.

8. Will the IRs be maintained by the Academy Trust or would they want to stop providing places in IRs at Wharncliffe Side/Nook Lane?

The schools (and therefore the Trust) feel inclusion is of the utmost importance and so we would wish to continue to provide IR places at both schools. We are



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dependent on the Local Authority to continue to commission places as are other schools and academies but would continue to offer IR provision as long as the LA commissions it.

9. How would you provide different career opportunities for staff?

Through the collaboration between schools, there will be greater opportunity for our staff to work together with colleagues from different settings on school improvement projects (see above about resource sharing). It could also be that when a staff member wishes to apply for a promotion, they gain a position elsewhere in the Trust rather than leaving the area altogether as we would be able to offer some promotion opportunities internally across the six academies – which is not currently possible as individual schools.

10. When is the process proposed to begin?

Each Governing Board would vote during meetings following the end of the consultation period, so legal work could begin towards the end of this term or the start of the Spring term 2018.

11. Will new staff have different contracts?

All staff would remain on 'Sheffield' contracts. New staff may have a multi-site contract if the role demands it (for instance if it was to provide a previously contracted out position across all the academies) but other terms and conditions would remain the same.

12. What about pay rises for staff?

As we would adhere to national and local agreements, these would be decided by the relevant external body as they are now.

13. To what extent will the school and teachers have the freedoms to offer the curriculum most suited to pupils?

Our model is set up to preserve autonomy in each school – we want to avoid the sometimes centralised approach of larger chains who impose one approach on all academies. Although we have a lot in common, the pupil populations at our schools are very different and so it is very important to keep the decision about curricular approach local.

14. I am concerned about a commercial body owning the land and building. What is to stop the rent increasing in the future and thus force the sale/closure of the school?

The Trust would be a charity rather than a commercial body and so must abide by the associated regulations – it cannot profit by selling off land and the directors receive no remuneration. The land is leased to the Trust by the LA



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rather than it becoming ‘owned’ by the Trust. All of this combines to mean it is difficult to ‘sell off’ land even if the Trust wanted to do so.

As now, the school/academy wouldn’t pay rent to use the site. It does, however, pay ‘rates’ to the council, which it would continue to do. These would be amended by the Council and remain out of our control.

15. Would there be any impact on the schools feeder status to Bradfield School?

No.

16. Would there be any changes to term time holiday dates?

This is unlikely – Sheffield Heads agreed to sign up to a pledge to set the dates together to avoid disruption within the system.

17. I believe Bradfield Secondary is already an academy. Would the primaries be part of the same academy group?

No. Bradfield is a ‘stand-alone’ academy – a single Academy Trust. Our proposal is to establish an entirely new Multi-Academy Trust.

18. We like the individuality of our school. Would the academy trust change it so all the schools had to be the same, have the same displays and uniforms etc?

No – this is exactly what we are trying to avoid, in fact. By working together to establish the Trust, we ensure that we can keep our individuality and continue to make local decisions that benefit our children.



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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.

