



# Learning Accord Multi Academy Trust

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### What is the current position?

On 28th April 2021 the Secretary of State for Education set out his vision for all schools to be part of a strong academy trust. A DFE document published on 29th April 2021 sets out the department's ambition for **all** schools to be part of strong academy trusts, in strong families of schools. It explains the benefits schools can access from being part of that structure. The document states that over 50% of pupils in the UK are now taught in academies. The Anglican Diocese of Leeds has developed an Academies Strategy and expects all church schools to move towards academy conversion.

#### 1. What is an Academy?

An Academy is a state school that is run by an Academy Trust. The Academy Trust enters into an agreement with the Secretary of State for Education that sets out its responsibilities and accountabilities for the effective running of the Academy. Academies are funded directly by the Government; not through the Local Authority. The Trust is given charitable exemption, which means it must operate much like a charity. Academies are still subject to Ofsted inspection.

#### 2. What is a Multi-Academy Trust?

A Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) is when 2 or more Academies come together in partnership. In a Multi-Academy Trust each school has converted to an Academy. In the future, it will be possible for other schools/Academies to join the Trust.

#### 3. Do School's keep their current Church School or community school status?

Church schools keep their current Church School status. Community schools are not required to adopt church status and transfer across as community academies. The Learning Accord MAT is a mixed multi-academy trust which has both church and community academies (currently 4 church academies and 4 community academies), with a fifth church school conversion pending. Each academy within the trust is very proud of its existing ethos and values and is able to preserve and protect this, whether it is a Church or a community school. The Multi-Academy Trust will ensure that the Church of England Foundation is always represented within the Board of Trustees.

#### 4. How would converting to an Academy benefit our School?

These changes are about enhancing teaching and learning for all children. Each school in the Trust is able to continue as the school for its community, able to work with the other MAT schools to share expertise and skills and operate more effectively. Converting to an Academy within a Multi-Academy Trust allows the school to make financial savings through joint purchase of resources over time. The MAT has greater freedom around the delivery of the curriculum, using its budget to work with the best partners available. Individual schools work very hard to create a curriculum which is relevant to their children and community, which meets the needs of the children. Academies have the freedom to continue to develop the curriculum whilst taking on board the best parts of the National Curriculum. At present, Academies can apply for capital grants to support building projects. The greater flexibility and the ability to innovate means that over time there would be more money to invest in the school for the benefit of the children.

Converting to become an academy allows a school to continue with the benefits it has already enjoyed as a community or church school.

## **5. Who will be responsible for running our schools?**

Each school within the MAT retains a head teacher on conversion and will continue to have their own local governing body. Each school continues to function in much the same way as at present. Each school continues to function in much the same way as at present. The Multi Academy Trust has a Board of Trustees who oversees the governance of the trust and monitors the performance of all of its schools. The Trust Board delegates powers to the local governing body which continues in a similar role that it currently has.

## **6. What is involved in becoming an Academy?**

Should a school decide that it would like to convert, a formal consultation would be completed with parents, pupils, staff and the wider community which the Governors would take into account in reaching their decision, this is part of the conversion process after application. Consultation with may also be carried out prior to an application being made. The Secretary of State for Education will decide (or not) to approve the application if Governors decide to proceed. Each school is given a start up grant to convert although the vast majority of this is used in the conversion process including legal fees etc. For Church Schools, the school must also submit the A1 and A2 forms to the Diocese to request approval to convert.

## **7. Would the school have to change its name, logo or uniform?**

There is no requirement to change the uniform or individual identity of the school. A school may change its name to include the title 'Academy' if the governors wish to do so. The logo may be amended to incorporate a new name if the name changes. In Learning Accord MAT, some schools are known as academies and others are known as schools.

## **8. How will being an Academy affect staff?**

After conversion all staff would be employed by the Multi Academy Trust. Staff are legally protected to transfer under the same employment terms and conditions, including pensions. Their continuity of service is protected, and all staff will be consulted in accordance with the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations. Learning Accord MAT works in line with the national pay and conditions of service for staff and uses Kirklees Human Resources and Payroll services (the same services used by Kirklees LA maintained schools now). The Academy Trust works to further develop staff skills and expertise and support their career development. Learning Accord staff that are employed at a specific academy are not required to move to another academy.

## **9. How are the children affected?**

In many ways the children will not notice any immediate difference; they will be in the same uniform, in the same classrooms with the same teaching staff. Each school in the Trust will continue to strive for an outstanding education for all children. However, in time the children may notice changes and improvements in the way that they learn, resulting from the greater training opportunities given to teaching staff to innovate and improve the pupils' learning.

## **10. Will we get more money as an Academy?**

Academies receive the same amount of per-pupil funding from the Education Skills Funding Agency as they would receive from the Local Authority as a maintained school. All funding comes direct from Government to the Multi Academy Trust which controls the overall budget. Each school does not necessarily have a lot more money, but as a group the schools are better able to control their budget. Local Authorities currently take a top slice from each school's allocation, in our experience schools are slightly better off after conversion.

## **11. What are the risks of becoming an Academy?**

The change to Academy takes a school out of Local Authority control, but does not exclude the school from Local Authority support. For example, Academies can continue to receive finance, HR, behavioural support and other services from the Local Authority and where these represent 'best

value' the MAT uses these services. Where the MAT feels that others can provide better services or better value; the change to Academy increases the freedom to make these changes. There are risks to not becoming an Academy within the current educational climate. Currently the Learning Accord Multi Academy Trust buys back the vast majority of the services from the local authority that they did before the trust's inception on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2017.

### **12. How will admissions to the school be affected?**

In a MAT, each school becomes its own admissions authority is required to adopt clear and fair admission arrangements in line with the admissions law and the School Admissions Code. The Local Authority will continue to have responsibility for making sure there are sufficient places locally and coordinates the admissions process for all schools. This means parents will still only have to complete one application per child. Applications will still be via the coordinated process. The admission policy will follow the existing arrangements that are in place.

### **13. Does becoming an Academy change the relationship with other schools and the community?**

No, Academies must ensure that they continue to be at the heart of their community, collaborating and sharing facilities and expertise with other schools and the wider community. Regardless of any MAT arrangements, we remain committed to working in partnership with other schools, including the local pyramid of schools.

### **14. Will our responsibilities in relation to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and exclusions change?**

No, responsibilities as an Academy in relation to SEND and exclusions will be just the same as they are now. Our 'Additional Needs Partnership' will continue.

### **15. Can a child with a statement nominate an Academy as his or her school of choice?**

Yes, schools converting to Academy status can retain the admissions criteria they currently use. These arrangements and related processes must at all times comply with the School Admissions Code.