



## **Academy Conversions Frequently Asked Questions Gargrave CE Primary School**

The information in this fact sheet is intended to help answer some of the questions which may arise as the school considers academy status and has been produced in conjunction with the Trust. This information cannot in any way replace the informal conversations and formal consultation that takes place during the conversion process.

### **What is an academy?**

An academy is a school that is directly funded by central government and independent of direct control by local authority. Academies are inspected by Ofsted under the same framework as maintained schools and for Church of England Schools the SIAMs framework.

### **What is a Multi-Academy Trust?**

A multi-academy trust (MAT) is a charitable company limited by guarantee which is formed to oversee a group of schools. The purpose of a school trust is, through its schools, to provide high quality education through effective support and assurance mechanisms. The Trust is the employer of staff and holds the land and buildings of each school.

### **Who are Yorkshire Causeway Schools Trust?**

Yorkshire Causeway is a multi-academy trust formed in 2015 which currently comprises 3,800 children, 600 staff and 100 governance colleagues working across 9 schools:

- All Saints CE Primary School, Kirkby Overblow
- Hampsthwaite CE Primary School
- North Rigton CE Primary School
- Oatlands Infant School
- Pannal Primary School
- Richard Taylor CE Primary School
- St Aidan's CE High School
- St Peter's CE Primary School, Harrogate
- Skipton Parish CE Primary School

### **How does governance work?**

Yorkshire Causeway Schools Trust is a partner trust with the Diocese of Leeds, which means that the Church of England is represented on the Trust Board and all levels of governance.

The Board of Trustees are accountable for the work of the Trust and the schools although many responsibilities are devolved to the CEO, headteachers and governors as set out in a Scheme of Delegation. In Yorkshire Causeway, each school has its own governing body who continue to support the Headteacher and are part of the monitoring and support mechanism that ensures that the school is performing well. In addition to the Headteacher, each governing body has representation from the Diocese (for church schools), parent/carers and staff.

### **How long does academy conversion take and how will the process affect the day-to-day running of the school?**

This will usually take 4-6 months. The day to day running will not be affected as planning and meetings to enable the conversion to take place are mainly out of the school day.

**What is the role of the MAT Chief Executive Officer (CEO)?**

The CEO is the strategic lead for the whole Trust and holds the role of Accounting Officer. In Yorkshire Causeway the CEO and central team work closely with Trust schools to provide support and assurance in areas such as educational improvement, HR, estates, safeguarding and finance.

**The priority for our school is the education of pupils. How will you ensure that joining an academy trust does not distract us from this?**

Part of the work of the school and the Trust, is to carry out 'due diligence' exercises to ensure effective preparation for the school's transition to the Trust. Yorkshire Causeway has been working in partnership with us for some time supporting the ongoing improvement of our school and together we will continue to focus on the teaching and learning and progress of children.

**What are the reasons schools consider converting to academy status?**

- To work as part of an organisation that the school has identified as sharing the same overall vision, values and ambitions for children.
- To provide more tailored support and professional development opportunities for staff, including the opportunity to work with others undertaking similar roles within the organisation.
- To benefit from school improvement activities and assurances which are focused on having ambition for our students.
- To draw on a range of centralized services and efficiencies with the purpose of improving effectiveness and/or reducing activities which take away from front-line teaching and learning.

**What parents and carers need to know**

- The school is not proposing to change its character and will continue to look, feel and be the same as it is now
- The School Leadership Team will continue to run the school daily as they do now, and parents will continue to have representation on the Governing Body
- The name of the school will not change, and the school will not change its admissions policy
- Children with special needs will continue to receive additional support in the way they do now
- Our local schools will continue to work closely together for each other as well as our children, and will be provided with support to help them become even better
- The multi-academy trust arrangements will share some central services across the schools which will help us be more efficient and make sure that funding is focused on teaching, learning and support for children
- The trust will work very closely and co-operatively with local partners, including other schools, community groups and organisations, and the local authority.

**Is an academy like a business?**

No. A business makes profit for its shareholders. An academy trust is a charitable organisation which cannot make profit. It produces a public Annual Report and Statement of Accounts setting out financial and academic performance.

**Who makes the decision to become an academy?**

School leadership and the governing body collaborates in respect of considering academisation, but ultimately it is the governing body which takes the decision to apply to the Department for Education to become an academy. Church schools must also seek the permission of the Diocese.

**Are academies bound by the same rules and regulations as other schools?**

Academy schools are required to follow the law and guidance on admissions, special educational needs and exclusions.

**Will the academy follow the National Curriculum?**

The Trust works with its schools to agree the curriculum. Generally, academy schools have more freedom to try different things in the curriculum and make sure that what is taught is relevant to our pupils and their specific needs. It must be broad and balanced.

**Does becoming an academy change the relationship with local schools and the community?**

No. Academy funding agreements state that they must ensure that the school remains a key part of the local community. As part of a trust, the school will also have a wider education community to engage with.

**As an academy, will it still work with the local authority?**

Academy schools are independent of the local authority. However, ongoing work with them as well as other local schools and local partners such as the Diocese will remain important to us.

**What about funding?**

The Department for Education meets the running costs for an academy. Academy funding is calculated on a like-for-like basis with local authority schools and therefore we will have a similar budget. With greater freedom to procure services from other providers and to realise cost efficiencies across the network, the school will be able to make more efficient use of resources to support school improvement. Like other schools, an academy cannot run at a loss or agree a deficit budget.

**How will the school be accountable financially?**

An academy school is governed by the rules and regulations for charitable trusts and company law. There will be robust systems with an annual audit conducted by an external independent auditor and wider internal scrutiny activities throughout the year.

**What functions would remain the statutory responsibility of the LA?**

- Home to school transport
- Education psychology, SEND statementing and assessment
- Monitoring of SEND provision
- Prosecution of parents for non-attendance
- Assigned SEND resources for pupils/students with rare conditions needing individually tailored provision
- Provision of specialist facilities for a student who is no longer registered at a school

**Who will be responsible and pay for assessments of pupils/students with additional needs?**

The LA retains the same statutory responsibility for students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in academies as they do for a maintained school. The school will continue to work closely with the LA and the Trust to ensure that our SEND pupils are well provided for and to ensure that the LA meets their statutory commitments with regard to pupils.

**Who will own the school building and land?**

In most instances, including ours the Diocese and local authority own the buildings and land which is then made available through legal agreements for the school to continue to operate as usual once it joins the Trust. If there is a freehold this transfers to the academy trust.

**Will the staff stay the same?**

When the school becomes an academy staff transfer to the academy trust under the same employment terms and conditions under the protection of TUPE legislation.

**Will you consult with staff, community and parents?**

Yes, we are consulting with all key stakeholder groups in order to gather feedback and suggestions, as well as addressing any questions or concerns.

**Will the school's admissions arrangements be required to change?**

No - academies are required to follow the law and guidance on admissions, SEND and exclusions as if they were maintained schools. It is the aim of the Trust to ensure that our academies provide high quality, inclusive education for all local children.

**Will the school need to change its name?**

No, there are no plans for this to happen.

**Can the academy continue to work with the local authority and other schools?**

Yes. The Trust and school can buy services from the local authority and will be encouraged to work with other schools to the benefit of staff and children.

**Will there be a new uniform?**

No, there are no plans to change the uniform

**What date would the Academy open?**

There are many variables to a school joining an academy trust, many of which are already underway. It is hoped that the school will open as an academy during the autumn term 2025.