

JOINING AN ACADEMY

FAQ



What is an Academy?

Academies are publicly funded independent schools that are not managed by a local authority but their funding and accountability is directly with the DfE (Department for Education).

What is a Multi-Academy?

A Multi-Academy Trust or academy chain is an academy trust that operates more than one academy school. Academy schools are state-funded schools in England which are directly funded by the Department for Education and independent of local authority control.

Why would a school become an Academy?

Academies take with them a portion of the money held by the Local Authority to run central support services to schools. As more schools convert to academies, these central funds have diminished to such an extent in Warwickshire that most services now operate on a 'traded service' basis. Warwickshire Local Authority is 'Academy Neutral' in its stance has already supported a large number of schools in becoming Academies.

We are increasingly seeing primary schools take advantage of joining established Multi-Academies to support the ever rising costs.

What are the benefits for school?

- Greater support for operational and strategic support of the school such as Finance, HR, IT and Estates Management.
- Access to a wider range of CPD opportunities for all staff.
- Freedom to develop the curriculum to meet the needs of our particular children.
- Academies have greater financial control and freedom to address shared priorities.
- Regular meetings with peers and Senior leaders.
- Governor training and development programmes.
- Targeted financial support.
- Marketing and communication support.
- Collective worship across the Multi Academy.

Does the school need agreement from the Local Authority to become an Academy?

No. The Academies Act 2010 has removed the need for the Local Authority to approve plans for the school to become an Academy.

What form of relationship will exist between the Local Authority and the school?

This is for individual Academies to determine – there is no statutory requirement for any formal relationship between Local Authorities and Academies.

Academies are directly funded and accountable to central government (Department for Education and the Education Funding Agency). The Local Authority retains statutory duties for aspects of Special Educational Needs, admissions coordination and provision of home-to-school transport.

Local Authorities are also expected to play a key strategic role locally in areas such as pupil place planning, admissions and sharing good practice.

However, we have very good relations with Warwickshire County Council and other neighbouring schools and will continue to work with them in a spirit of cooperation after conversion.

Will the school be better supported as an Academy rather than an LA school?

The local authority recognise that by joining a multi-academy trust schools will be supported and linked in with other partner schools in a way that can no longer be achieved by the local authority.

Will the school change its name and uniform as some other Academies have done?

A change of name is not always appropriate with Academy conversions but it can sometimes mark an important point in the school's history .

It is not envisaged that the uniform will be changed but a review of the above may result in a change of logo.

Are Academies subject to the same Ofsted, and in the case of church schools Section 48, inspection regime?

Yes, Schools converting to Academies will continue to be inspected in the normal way.

Will we get more money as an Academy?

Academies receive the same amount of per-pupil funding as they would receive from the Local Authority as a maintained school plus an additional 'Education Services Grant' to reflect funding held centrally by Local Authorities. The Government is clear that becoming an Academy should not bring about a financial advantage or disadvantage to a school. However, academies do have greater freedom to decide how they use their entire budget.

Will becoming an Academy affect our admissions arrangements?

The process for admissions – coordinated by the Local Authority – will remain the same

In the same way as maintained schools, all academies are required to adopt clear and fair admission arrangements in line with the admissions law and the School Admissions Code.

Who is responsible for setting any catchment areas when a school converts to become an Academy?

The Academy is its own admission authority. That means that it becomes responsible for its own admissions arrangements. If the School has a catchment area, on conversion it retains that catchment area unless it decides to change it.

The LA cannot change an Academy's catchment area even if it has previously done so when the school was a maintained school. Any change of catchment area by a school must follow a strict procedure including consultation within a given timeframe.

Will Academies have to be a part of the annual coordinated admissions scheme? E.g. when the LA needs to find places for families relocating to the area etc.

Yes – Academy Funding Agreements require them to be in local coordination. That means although the academy will apply its own admission arrangements, the LA will send out offers of places.

The Local Authority in Warwickshire also coordinates admissions for in-year applications and applications for year groups other than the normal point(s) of entry.

This will not affect the Academy's right to determine which applicants have priority for admission. Academies are also required through their Funding Agreements to participate in local fair access protocols which help to ensure that no child is without a school place.

Can new Academies decide to bring in academic selection?

No, there will be no expansion of selection. Schools which already select some or all of their pupils may continue to do so when they become Academies, but schools becoming Academies cannot decide to become newly selective schools.

Will our responsibilities in relation to Special Educational Needs and exclusions change?

No. Responsibilities as an Academy in relation to Special Educational Needs and exclusions will be just the same as they are now as a maintained school.

Can a child with a statement of Special Educational Needs nominate an academy as their school of choice?

Yes. These arrangements and related processes must at all times comply with the School Admissions Code and responsibilities as an Academy in relation to Special Educational Needs will be just the same as they are now as a maintained school.

Does becoming an Academy change the way in which exclusions are dealt with?

Academies are required by their Funding Agreement to follow the law and guidance on exclusions as if they were maintained schools. This includes reporting exclusions to the Local authority. However, Academies do not have to consult the Local Authority before deciding to exclude a pupil and they can arrange their own independent appeals panel.