THORNABY C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL
Baysdale Road, Thornaby
Stockton-on-Tees TS17 9DB
Tel 01642 763060 Fax 01642 751002
Email thornabyce.school@stockton.gov.uk
Website http://www.sbcschools.org.uk/thornaby

Frequently asked questions about academy conversions

The information in this fact sheet is intended to help answer some of the questions which may arise when considering conversion to academy status and has been produced in conjunction with Dales Academies 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 an all-ability school that is directly funded by central government and independent of direct control by local government. Academies are inspected by Ofsted under the same framework as maintained schools. Academies are self-governing.

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 who are academies. The MAT is the employer of staff and holds the land and buildings of each academy in Trust.

How does governance work?
There is a Board of Trustees who are ultimately responsible for the work of the Trust and the academies. However, they devolve much of the responsibility to the individual academies and their respective local governing bodies. Each academy has its own governing body who work with the academy Headteacher to check that the academy is making good progress and add additional challenge and scrutiny to the work of the school. Each governing body has parent/carer and staff representatives. The academy Headteacher is always a governor for the time they are employed in that role.

The governing body will set the vision for the academy in line with the overall commitment of the multi academy trust. The governing body also draft the academy spending plan and improvement plan for approval by The Trust Board. The governing body has delegated powers from the Trust Board including the management of finance and property and the appointment of staff.

Why does our school have to join a MAT?
If schools are judged by Ofsted to be 'good' or 'outstanding' they do not have to join a MAT if they don't want to. Some are choosing to join MATs because of the benefits this brings but good and outstanding schools all have different reasons for joining or not joining a MAT. Schools which are judged to be 'Inadequate' or have been judged as 'Requires Improvement' three consectutive times will receive an academy order from the Department for Education and will have to make arrangements to join a MAT as soon as they can.

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.

THORNABY C OF E
PRIMARY SCHOOL
Baysdale Road, Thornaby
Stockton-on-Tees TS17 9DB
Tel 01642 763060 Fax 01642 751002
Email thornabyce.school@stockton.gov.uk
Website http://www.sbcschools.org.uk/thornaby

What is the role of the MAT Chief Executive Officer?
They are the Accounting Officer for the trust and the strategic lead for the whole Trust. The CEO is the key contact for the Regional Schools Commissioner and the DfE and acts as the point of first contact to ensure schools are not distracted from their core purpose of teaching and learning.

The priority for our school is the education of young people. How will you ensure that the academy formation does not distract us from this?
Part of the work of the school and MAT, will be to carry out 'due diligence' exercises which will make clear what extra support to convert may be needed. Dales Academies Trust will work with us to ensure we can continue to focus on the teaching and learning and progress of children. It's important that all schools are open about the amount of support they might need to enter into and go through the process.

What is the main motivation for converting to academy status?
- To shape the provision to meet the future needs of our children, families and communities based on a local and collaborative proposal of working together and building on existing good practice
- We will remain in charge of our own destiny as the government has a goal to encourage all schools to be academies or working towards academy status
- The Local Authority (LA) capacity is reducing and in some cases disappearing. Pooling the resources of a number of schools means we can re-create some of the services once received from the LA
- To develop the expertise of all staff to further improve effectiveness and outcomes for children
- To generate financial efficiencies to invest back into the classroom for the benefit of the children

What parents and carers need to know
- The school is not proposing to change its character and ethos and will continue to look, feel and be the same as it is now
- The School Leadership team and Governing Body will continue to run the school daily as they do now, and parents will continue to be represented 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 very closely together for each other as well as your children, and will be provided with more support to help them become even better
- The multi-academy trust arrangements will share some central services across the schools which will help them be more efficient and make sure that funding is focused on teaching, learning and support for children
- The multi-academy 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 is a charitable trust which cannot make profit. It does report annually into the public domain on financial and academic performance.

Who makes the decision to become an academy?
The governing body. The Department for Education and the Diocese then approve the request.

Are academies bound by the same rules and regulations as other schools?
Academies are required to follow the law and guidance on admissions, special educational needs and exclusions.

THORNABY C OF E
PRIMARY SCHOOL
Baysdale Road, Thornaby
Stockton-on-Tees TS17 9DB
Tel 01642 763060 Fax 01642 751002
Email thornabyce.school@stockton.gov.uk
Website http://www.sbcschools.org.uk/thornaby

Will the academies follow the National Curriculum?
Yes, but it would 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 we will be at the heart of its community, collaborating and sharing facilities and expertise with other local schools and the wider community.

As an academy, will it still work with the local authority (LA)?
Academies are independent of the local authority. However, we wish to continue working the LA, other local schools and local partners.

What about funding?
The Department for Education via the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) meets the running costs for an academy. Academy funding is calculated on a like-for-like basis with local authority schools. Therefore the academy will have a similar budget to that of its predecessor maintained school. With greater freedom to procure services from other providers and to realise cost efficiencies across the network, the academy 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, i.e. it must break-even.

How will the school be accountable financially?
An academy is governed by the rules and regulations for charitable trusts and company law, e.g. we will be required to produce and file accounts and trustees cannot be paid. There will be robust systems with an audit conducted by an external independent auditor.

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 would for a maintained school. We would continue to work closely with the LA to ensure that our SEND pupils are well provided for and to ensure that the LA meets their statutory commitments with regard to pupils.

Does it cost to become an academy?
Yes. There are legal, financial and project costs associated with becoming an academy. The government gives each converting academy £25,000 to contribute towards these costs.

Who will own the school building and land?
The academy trust will either hold the freehold or enter into a 125 year lease for the land and buildings.

THORNABY C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL
Baysdale Road, Thornaby
Stockton-on-Tees TS17 9DB
Tel 01642 763060 Fax 01642 751002
Email thornabyce.school@stockton.gov.uk
Website http://www.sbcschools.org.uk/thornaby

Will the staff stay the same?
When a school converts from a local authority maintained school to a new academy, all permanent staff are entitled to transfer to it under the same employment terms and conditions. The process of conversion assumes 'as is' for staff and that they continue to teach the same classes as previously.

Will you consult with staff, community and parents?
Yes, we will consult with all key stakeholder groups during the transition phase. This will include the sharing of our plans for the new academy trust and an opportunity to gather feedback and suggestions, as well as addressing any questions or concerns. A clear consultation will take place.

Will the school remain non-selective?
Yes - academies are non-selective schools. 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?
We will not change our name unless there is a compelling reason during consultation to do so.

Can the academy work with the council and other schools?
Yes. Where possible and appropriate, the academy will buy back services to from the local authority. The academy can work with any schools it wishes if this makes a difference to the education of the children.

Will there be a new uniform?
No. Uniform will be the same as it is now unless there is a compelling reason during the consultation to do so.

What date would the Academy open?
The proposal subject to approval from the Department for Education is for Thornaby C of E Primary School to open on the 1st July 2019.