

CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

What is an academy?

Academies are publicly funded independent schools who receive their funding directly from the Department for Education and are free from local authority control. These schools can take advantage of a range of 'freedoms' which have the potential to improve provision and raise standards.

The position so far...

Under the new academies programme there have been 6,996 (January 2018) schools which have converted from maintained schools to academies.

Why should Lytchett Matravers Primary School become an Academy?

The Governing Body's primary function is to ensure that the school delivers the best possible education for its pupils and families. It is also part of the school vision that working within the local community enhances the education for the children both within the school and in other schools locally. With these key aims in mind it may be the case that becoming an academy could offer significant benefits which could support the school's drive for continuous improvement.

The Department of Education offers academy schools a new range of freedoms which enable them to become more innovative and responsive to learners' needs:

1. Greater autonomy to purchase services and support for the school

Academies receive funding directly from the Education & Skills Funding Agency that, as maintained schools, is held by the Local Authority to run services for schools. Academies are then free to look elsewhere for services which provide an improved and more efficient service and offer better value for money.

2. Curriculum freedoms

Academies are free to innovate and develop a curriculum which meets the specific needs of the pupils in the school.

In our experience, our staff and governors are proud of the dynamic and creative curriculum that delivers high standards and motivates and excites the children. In the future we wish to continue to develop in ways that suit our pupils' needs and not to be required to introduce a new 'one size fits all' curriculum which the government is currently devising. Instead the school would be able to select aspects of the new curriculum which it feels most suits the needs of its pupils.

3. Developing partnerships

Academies are free to develop closer links with other partners such as other local schools. Expertise in one school can be shared with other schools to the benefit of the community of schools and their pupils. Schools converting to academy status together can take advantage of sharing services and resources, using money to benefit pupils across a number of schools, shared CPD and developing lasting partnerships. There are a number of joint roles working across the schools including Standard Officers, Family Support Workers and Finance and Business Specialists.

For the children and staff of our schools there will be greater opportunities for developing partnerships with colleagues at other schools within the Hamwic Education Trust.

There is much more to do in the future, and much of this work can be sustained and extended by schools accessing the academy freedoms collectively.

FAQs

How will the consultation impact on the governing body's decision?

The governing body will not take a final decision on the questions until the consultation process has been completed. You have the option of providing your comments in writing or by coming to the consultation meeting. The governors will then consider and comments/representations received before making a final decision.

Will the curriculum stay the same?

The curriculum in core subjects – English, Maths and Science – will follow the national curriculum. As an academy there are curriculum freedoms to teach other subjects e.g. languages.

Can the term dates be changed?

Academies can change term dates, however the school would consider any implication of change very carefully and would keep parents informed.

Will the uniform change?

No

Will the current Governing Body remain as governors once conversion happens?

Yes, governors can transfer as they are and will become the schools' Local Governing Body. The categories of governors changes although there are still requirements according to the Memorandum of Articles. Schools within the Trust have different models of governance.

If there is a change in management in the Trust, would the vision be changed – could the academy conversion be reversed?

No

Will there be more money available upon conversion?

Not directly. The LA currently receives school funding from the DfE for the school. A certain amount is top sliced to provide services. Academy funding comes directly to the school from the ESFA. A percentage is then paid to Hamwic to cover the central costs (currently 5.5%). This is the same for all primary schools within the Trust. If there is a surplus at the end of the year (above the Trust's Reserves Policy) then this is distributed back to schools.

The central charge of 5.5% is normally significantly lower than the LA top slice. The Trust is also able to achieve economies of scale for certain purchases through efficient procurement.

Will Pupil Premium/Special Needs funding money stay the same?

Yes schools will still receive this.

How does the support on offer from Hamwic differ from what is offered as a maintained school?

The Local Authority no longer has the resources to provide the support and CPD opportunities to the school. Joining Hamwic will enable staff to have the opportunity to visit good and outstanding schools and observe and share good practice and CPD across schools in the Trust.

Will the school still have Ofsted inspections?

Yes all schools are required to have Ofsted inspections. The Hamwic Education Trust have a Standards Team who help to raise standards and prepare schools for inspections.

In getting the school to good/outstanding, will there be more pressure on staff and consequently pupils?

Staff usually welcome the opportunity and support and pupils benefit from this.

Do academies exclude more pupils more than maintained schools?

This would be a school decision and our schools have always been inclusive and would continue to be so.

How does the Hamwic Education Trust invest in schools?

The Hamwic Education Trust is a not for profit organisation, however the Trust provides support in terms of standards, school improvement, finance, HR, health and safety and IT as well as submitting capital improvement bids to the Education Skills & Funding Agency to improve school buildings.

Why has every school not become an academy?

It is the current government agenda for all schools to be academies.

Will teachers be out of class more?

No, teachers get planning time (PPA) approximately one afternoon a week and there are also after school sessions and Inset days dedicated to CPD.

What changes will parents see on a day to day basis?

Probably not a great deal. There will be a lot of support for teachers and support staff in the background, however there probably won't be a huge noticeable change. The school will still have the same Governing Body and the focus will be on raising standards and expectations.

Will the school be financially better off?

Not necessarily, however there will be benefits from economies of scale through procurement and also some service level agreements will no longer be necessary.

What about the academies that have failed?

There has been a lot of negative press regarding academies. The Hamwic Education Trust has a track record of raising standards in their schools with three years of data demonstrating that standards have improved. The model is based on local communities of schools supporting each other (with Head Teachers meeting regularly) for the benefit of the pupils within their community.

What say do the parents have?

Part of the consultation process is to consult with parents and staff. All feedback and questions will go to the governors for consideration.

How long does the process take?

In general it is approximately three months.

How do staff feel?

Staff have been very supportive and are looking forward to having extra support and the opportunity to observe other schools and share best practice.

How would the admissions arrangements work?

There is no proposal that the admissions arrangements for the school would change were the school to convert. As an academy, we would be responsible for our admissions and we would make the decisions in accordance with our published admission arrangements. We would however continue to be part of the LA's co-ordinated admission arrangements.

We would continue to be bound by and comply with:

- The School Admission Code and the School Admissions Appeal Codes and
- The LA's Fair Access Protocol

What about the governing body's obligations under the Equality Act?

The governors are mindful of their duty to have due regards to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The relevant protected characteristics are:-

- (a) age;
- (b) disability;
- (c) gender re-assignment;
- (d) pregnancy and maternity;
- (e) race;
- (f) religion or belief;
- (g) sex; and
- (h) sexual orientation.

The governing body will be carrying out its own assessment of any such impact on the protected characteristics of a decision to move forward with academy status, but if there is anything related to this which you would like to draw to the governors' attention, please get in touch.