

ACADEMY CONVERSION AND JOINING A MULTI ACADEMY TRUST

This document provides you with information about the proposed change to academy status and the “Multi Academy Trust” (MAT).

The Haygrove Academy Trust is seeking to grow as a cross-phase, mixed Multi-Academy Trust and to include the formal membership of four primary schools: Spaxton CofE Primary School, Stogursey CofE Primary School and Crowcombe & Stogumber CofE Primary schools.

The provisional name for our Multi Academy Trust is the “**Quantock Education Trust**”.

All the above primary schools have received their academy orders from the Secretary of State for Education. All of the schools are “good” or “outstanding” according to their latest Ofsted inspections. Other schools may come on board and join the multi-academy trust in the future, subject to agreement of the founding member schools.

As you may be aware, the Government is keen to encourage all schools to become academies and be part of a multi-academy trust, either by joining an existing one or setting up a new one.

We believe that our best option is to join and expand this multi-academy trust with like-minded colleagues.

THE TRUST’S VISION/VALUES:

The Trust’s vision: to deliver an exceptional education with the aim of increasing the life opportunities for all learners in our trust community, regardless of their ability or background.

The Trust’s mission: to improve outcomes for all pupils across the trust and ensure that every child fulfils his or her potential and makes excellent progress.

Building Character and Shaping Futures

The Trust is essentially defined by its values and ethos, which drive our school improvement model, and presents a unique, all-through offer which prioritises academic achievement underpinned by the development of attributes and personal qualities, which foster a love of learning and the development of civic and moral character from early childhood through to young adulthood. A holistic approach to the development of the ‘whole child’ will be delivered through the Trust programme for ‘Social, Moral, Cultural and Spiritual’ development. The Trust’s values are key drivers for how every child and adult thinks, feels and acts. The values are also critical to the Trust agenda for raising aspiration and ambition, which are clearly relevant as part of the local demographic.

The Trust's Values:

Respect

Courtesy

Responsibility Care & Compassion

Friendship

Resilience

Belonging

Pride

Central to the Trust's vision is the imperative that every child:

- feels safe and happy;
- feels confident and able to participate;
- knows how to make safe and healthy choices;
- has a voice and is heard;
- is able to learn with enjoyment and without disruption;
- is taught a moral code which embraces the traditional values of respect, courtesy and responsibility;
- demonstrates care and compassion;
- is highly valued and cared for as an individual;
- demonstrates pride and a sense of belonging;
- is treated as an equal;
- receives the highest quality of teaching and care.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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. The academy is funded directly by the Government and is no longer run by the Local Authority. The Trust is charitable, which means it must operate much like a charity and not for the profit of individuals or businesses.

What is involved in becoming an Academy?

The Governing Body has voted for this proposal in principle, and the Secretary of State for Education has approved our application in principle and has issued an Academy Order which allows the school to convert if the governors so decide in due course. The school must complete consultations with parents, pupils, staff and the wider community which the governors will take into account in reaching its decision.

What is a Multi-Academy Trust?

A Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) is when two or more academies come together in partnership. Our Governing Body believes that the best option is to form our own multi-academy trust with like-minded schools rather than join an existing multi-academy trust.

Will our school definitely become an Academy?

Any comments or representations which are made about the proposals will be considered by the Governing Body before a decision is taken to sign the Funding Agreement. The Governing Body will not agree to sign the Funding Agreement unless they are content that conversion would be in the best interests of the school, taking account of all of the legal and practical ramifications.

When will our school become an Academy?

Our target date for becoming an academy is 1st August 2019.

How would converting to an Academy benefit our school?

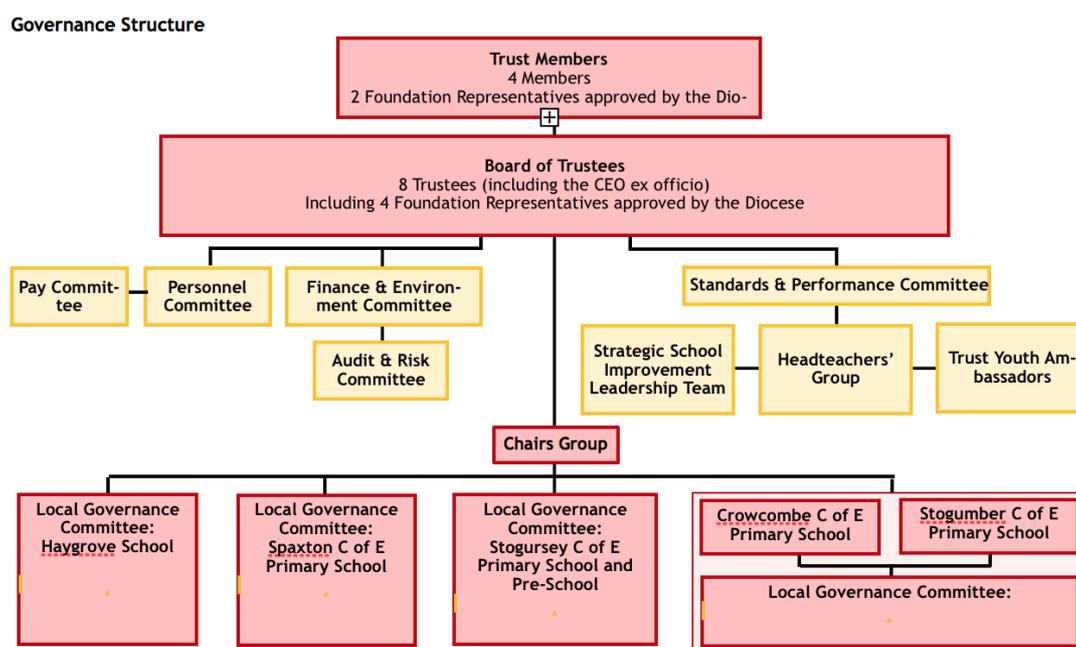
Changing to an academy within a multi-academy trust is about enhancing teaching and learning for all the children. It would allow us to share skills and operate more effectively. For example:

- developing and sharing best practice in teaching, learning and curriculum.
- expansion of curriculum and out-of-school activities by access to specialist teachers and specialised teaching areas
- creating a skilled, motivated, expert workforce
- ensuring high standards through mutual challenge of performance
- making optimum use of our resources, and providing access to practical resources and otherwise unavailable to a small school
- streamlining some of the administrative and 'behind-the-scenes' operation
- offering a smoother transition for those of our Year six pupils moving on to Haygrove School
- provide a continuum of education from 2-16.

In addition, Academies are independent of Local Authority control – this means that academies have more freedom about how they conduct themselves. Academies receive their funding directly from central government, which means more control on what proportion of money is used for central services.

What is the organisation of the Multi-Academy Trust?

The MAT is effectively a charitable company. The governance structure of the Multi-Academy Trust is shown in the diagram below:



Who will be the Members and Trustees of the Multi-Academy Trust?

The role of the Members is a ‘hands-off, eyes on’ role, similar to the governance role of the local authority in a maintained school. Members will have limited powers which will include the right to wind up the Academy Trust, amend the articles of association, appoint other members and appoint and remove one or more Trustees.

The Trustees form the Board of Trustees (‘Board’). The articles of association will stipulate the number and types of Trustees that the Academy Trust should have. The role of the Board is to champion best interests for all across the Trust and deliver the core functions common to school governance whilst holding the CEO to account. The Trustees are responsible for the strategic direction, the broad policy framework of the Trust, monitoring the effectiveness of individual academies, managing central services and reporting to the Department for Education and the Diocese. They work with their academies to ensure they are performing to their best ability and that they get the support they require. Members and Trustees are all volunteers and are not paid, just like our governors now.

The Trustees are also Directors of the Academy which is a company limited by guarantee and registered as such at Companies House.

Who will be responsible for running our school?

The Trustee Board will delegate responsibilities via a Scheme of Delegation to the Local Governing Committees. Each school in the Multi-Academy Trust will have its own Local Governing Committee (LGC) which will have a role similar to that of the current School Governing Body and just as with our current Governing Body, these will be unpaid volunteers from the local community. The Headteacher and Local Governing Committee will continue to lead our school on a daily basis and parents will continue to be represented as they are now with two elected parent Governors.

Has the Department for Education or the Local Authority put pressure on the school to convert?

No. This is a decision taken by the Governing Body after careful consideration of all available information. It believes it represents the best way to preserve the future of the school, whilst continuing to strive to provide an outstanding education for all the young people in our area.

What does the conversion process involve and how long does it take?

The conversion process involves at least five elements:

- the setting up of a charitable company known as the Multi-Academy Trust with memorandum and articles of association
- putting in place a funding agreement between the MAT and the Secretary of State for the running and funding of the academy schools
- transferring the employment of the staff of the school(s) from the local authority or governing body (as applicable) to the academy trust in accordance with TUPE
- negotiating a commercial transfer agreement for the transfer of assets and contracts of the school(s) from the Local Authority and/or governing body to the academy trust
- arranging for the MAT to have use of the land and buildings of the schools, usually either by way of a 125 year lease with the local authority or the transfer of the freehold of the land, as applicable.

The basic start up grant of £25,000 is paid to all converters when they are approved in principle to become an academy and can be used to support the process. The key steps a school must take are all explained in the Department of Education (DfE)'s conversion guide.

The length of time to convert varies but is not usually sooner than four months from the start of consultation. A school can change its mind right up to the point where documents are sent to the Secretary of State for signature, which is usually two or three weeks before the planned conversion date.

Will our school have to change its name, logo or uniform?

There is no obligation for a school to change its name. We intend to keep our names as Crowcombe CofE Primary School, Stogumber CofE Primary School and Railway Children Pre-School. We will not be changing our uniform as we want to preserve the identity of the school. Our school will retain its character and will continue to look, feel and be the same as it is now. Most of the changes will be behind the scenes. However, we will be including the name of the multi-academy trust in our branding as we want it to be clear that we are part of a family of schools who are working closely together.

How will being an Academy affect staff?

Staff will be transferred to the MAT on existing terms and conditions, under TUPE regulations i.e. Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations. We hope that the new opportunities afforded by the MAT will reassure and encourage staff that they remain a vital part of the school's commitment to our children.

How are the children affected?

In many ways the children will not notice any immediate difference as they will be in the same uniform, in the same classrooms with the same teaching staff. We will continue to strive for an outstanding education for all our 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.

How will the Academy be funded?

Academies receive the same amount of per-pupil funding as they would receive from the Local Authority as a maintained school. They also receive additional funding in the form of the Education Services Grant to cover the services that are no longer provided for them by the Local Authority and to cover the costs of academy status. All funding comes direct from Government to the Multi-Academy Trust. Each school does not necessarily have more money, but as a group, the schools are better able to control that part of the budget currently "top sliced" by the Local Authority.

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 and other services from the Local Authority, and where these represent 'best value' the MAT would use 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 associated with not changing to academy status. At some stage in the future, any school might be influenced to become part of a broader academy chain. We believe that the ability to create a local MAT, under local direction, offers the best opportunity to sustain vibrant, successful local schools

How will admissions to the school be affected?

Parents will continue to be able to apply for the school of their choice. Schools in the MAT would continue their strong relationships with feeder schools and would continue to support transition to all the schools parents choose. As publicly-funded schools, academies must have admission arrangements that clearly set out how children will be admitted, including the criteria that will be applied if there are more applications than available places. Academies, as their own admission authorities, must ensure that the practices and the criteria used to decide the allocation of school places are fair, clear and objective.

Academies are required to undertake periodic consultation on their admission arrangements, regularly publish their admission arrangements, and conduct the admission process as part of a wider local authority process. The local authority will continue to exercise their statutory responsibilities with respect to 'Admissions'. This does not affect the MAT Admissions Policy itself (for which the local authority will already have been a Consultee in the annual Admissions Policy cycle).

Academies are required to comply with the DfE's Admission Code of Practice December 2014 as if they were maintained schools. They are also required to participate in local authority co-ordination of admissions processes and the local authority's Fair Access Protocol. The Trust is responsible for setting up Independent Appeal Panels in accordance with the DfE's School Admission Appeals Code, February 2012. The purpose of this Code is to ensure the independence of admission appeal panels and to ensure that all admission appeals for MAT academies are conducted in a fair and transparent way.

Academies are required to provide education for pupils of different abilities (i.e. they may not select pupils by ability).

For applications in the normal admissions round (Reception/Year 7), local authorities must provide a common application form (CAF) that enables parents to express their preference for a place at any state funded school, including academies, with a minimum of 3 preferences in rank order, allowing them to give reasons for their preferences. While the local authority coordinates applications, it is the MAT Admissions Authority which considers applications, as part of the admissions timeline.

What inspection regimes and assessment data information do academies have to provide?

All academies are inspected by Ofsted using the same framework and timescales as for maintained schools. Academies will still have to take part in national tests and in teacher assessments of pupils' performance in exactly the same way as they do currently.

Will the school have to follow the National Curriculum?

Academies are not required to teach the National Curriculum but rather a broad and balanced one that includes English, Mathematics, Science, Languages and Religious Education, and promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils preparing them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life. Within the Trust individual academies will be responsible for their own curriculum development in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation and in line with expressed aims and values of the Trust.

The Trust will co-ordinate and promote its academies to work together more closely to encourage curriculum innovation and sharing of good practice. It is unlikely that pupils' experience of the curriculum will be significantly different.

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.

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.

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.

How will each school's individual ethos and character – whether Church or Community – be protected?

Everybody involved in establishing the MAT is committed to ensuring that every school remains individual. The legal documents which establish the MAT and the contract with the Secretary of State will require that the schools continue to operate with the same ethos and character that they have before they convert. The involvement of the Church of England means that our Church schools can be part of the Trust and that our particular ethos will be protected. But the Members, Trustees and Local Governors will be required to ensure that community schools ethos is protected and retained and cannot be changed.