

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT ACADEMY CONVERSION**

### **GENERAL QUESTIONS**

#### **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.

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

When a group of academies join together formally to collaborate on improving and maintaining high educational standards across the whole group, they create a multi academy trust (MAT). Some services will be centralised in the trust, for example finance and human resources, and the trust will set the strategic lines of development for the whole trust.

#### **What is the main motivation for converting to academy status?**

Schools become academies for several different reasons:

- ☐ National curriculum: Academies do not have to follow the national curriculum as long as the curriculum remains 'broad and balanced'. This will provide us with greater flexibility to determine what best suits our children.
- ☐ Financial budgets: Academies receive funding directly from central government instead of via the local authority. This will include money that would previously have been held back by the local authority. An academy may also accumulate funds from private sources should it choose to.
- ☐ Admissions: Academies are responsible for drawing up their own admissions criteria in line with the Admissions Code and SEN Code of Practice (the law). Academies are required to cater for children of all abilities (unless they were already selective).
- ☐ Length of terms and school days: Academies are free to set the length of its terms and school days.
- ☐ Pay and terms of conditions of staff: The academy is responsible for agreeing levels of pay, conditions of service, staffing structures, career development and appraisal. However all existing staff transfer from the local authority under legislation known as TUPE regulations which will protect their current conditions.

At Trafalgar we wish to maintain the individual character of the school as an infant and community school and provide quality support for our staff to ensure children receive the best possible education in their earliest years at school.

#### **Is an academy like a business?**

No. A business makes profit for its shareholders. An academy is a charitable trust which cannot make profit.

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

The governing board.

#### **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.

## **THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM**

### **Will the academy 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.

## **PARTNERSHIP**

### **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 will be at the heart of its community, collaborating and sharing facilities and expertise with other local schools and the wider community.

This is what Trafalgar does now and we intend to continue to do so in the future.

### **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. There may be services we currently pay for from West Sussex that we would want to continue to use where they are good value.

## **GOVERNANCE**

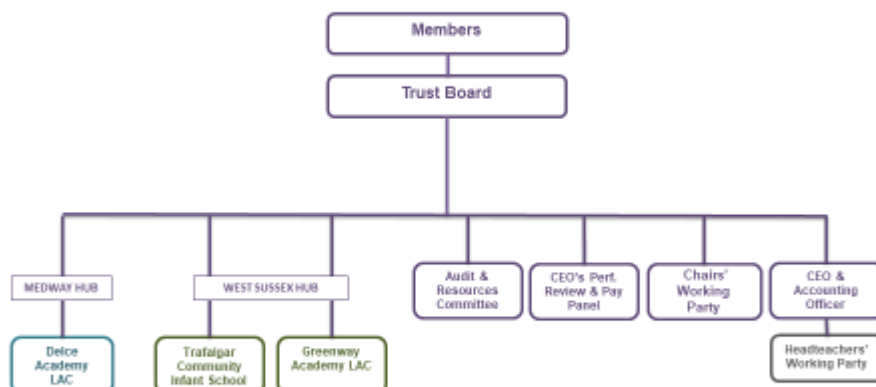
### **How does governance work?**

Under the Articles of Association for Castle Trust, the existing FGB will convert to a Local Advisory Committee (LAC). The LAC will have delegated responsibilities as defined in the trust's Articles of Association., which are the latest recommended version from the DfE/EFSA.

The LAC will undertake to challenge and support the leadership of the school ensuring the school continues to effectively safeguard children, continues its improvement drive through high quality first teaching and learning, deliver pupil outcomes which are good or better, continues to remove the disadvantaged gap, maintain (or improve) on the current Ofsted Good judgement and work alongside the trust to ensure efficient and effective financial spend.



## Governance Structure with Trafalgar Community Infant School



*Learning For All, By All, With All*

Further details can be found on the Castle Trust website,

## **FUNDING**

### **What will happen to our school's funding?**

The Department for Education meets the running costs for an academy in full. Academy funding is calculated on a like-for-like basis with local authority schools. Therefore, we will have a similar budget to our current one. With greater freedom to procure services from other providers and to realise cost efficiencies across the trust, we will be able to make more efficient use of resources to support school improvement. Like other schools, we will not be able to run at a loss or agree a deficit budget. We will have to continue our careful management of all spending to achieve a balanced budget, just as we do now,

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

An academy is governed by the rules and regulations for charitable trusts, 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.

### **How does academy status affect SEN funding?**

SEN funding will come directly from the government through the Education Funding Agency. Funding allocated to a named child would continue to be funded directly by the local authority.

### **Does it cost to become an academy?**

Yes. There are legal 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 local authority will be required to grant a 125 year lease to the academy trust.

## **EMPLOYMENT AND STAFFING**

### **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.

### **Will the terms of employment for staff change?**

As part of TUPE arrangements, staff are entitled to transfer to the new academy under the same employment terms and conditions. We would want to do this even if it was not a legal requirement.

### **What will happen with regard to staff pensions?**

If you are a teacher, your pension will continue as part of the teacher's pension scheme, with the Trust continuing with the same employer responsibilities as West Sussex. Non-teaching staff will usually be members of the local government pension scheme and the Trust will secure 'admitted body' status with the local pension authority to protect the pension rights of employees and take on employer responsibility, both for contributions and administration of the scheme.

Staff can opt out of either if they wish to make alternative provision.

### **What happens if the headteacher leaves?**

The academy trust will work with the academy governors to appoint a new headteacher/principal.

## **CONSULTATION**

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

Yes, we will consult with all key stakeholder groups during the transition phase as this is a good opportunity to gather feedback and suggestions, as well as addressing any questions or concerns.

### **Will the Trust recognise and engage with our trade unions?**

Yes, and we expect they will play a key role in the consultation process on TUPE for staff.

## **ADMISSIONS**

### **Will the school remain non-selective?**

Yes - academies are non-selective schools. Academies are required to follow the law and guidance on admissions, special educational needs and exclusions as if they were maintained schools. Trafalgar has a proud tradition of providing for the needs of all pupils and we intend to continue to do so.

## **THE NEW ACADEMY**

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

No except to become “academy” instead of “school”.

### **Can the academy work with the council and other schools?**

Yes. We may buy back services we currently use from the local authority. The academy can work with any schools it wishes to, if this makes a positive difference to the education of the children, including continuing to work with the West Horsham Locality and TS24 teaching school alliance

### **Will there be a new uniform?**

No.