

Frequently Asked Questions:

What is an academy?

An academy is a school that is directly funded by central government and independent of direct control by local government. Academies are inspected by Ofsted. Academies are self-governing.

What is the main motivation for converting to academy status and joining Quantum Multi-Academy Trust (QMAT)?

- Collaborative Learning Environment: Cold Norton Primary School will benefit from collaborating with QMAT schools, sharing best practices, resources, training and pedagogical approaches. For example, adaptive teaching and the teaching of phonics
- Driving Primary Education: We have the opportunity to support the direction of travel within primary education in the trust
- Transition (Systems and Processes): Being in a MAT with both primary and secondary schools, could facilitate a smoother transition for students moving from primary to secondary education. Shared curriculum frameworks, assessment practices, key systems and communication channels can ensure continuity
- Transition (Pedagogy & Curriculum): Strengthen transition, even more, from Year 6 to Year 7 to avoid 'coasting years' at Key Stage 3
- The support that the LA offers Cold Norton Primary has reduced considerably. Therefore the MAT will be supporting and challenging the school to continually improve.

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 body.

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.

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.

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.

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.

How does governance work?

QMAT has a board of Trustees who are ultimately responsible for the work of the Trust and the academies. However, they devolve as much responsibility as possible to the individual academies. The Board of Trustees is responsible for appointing the majority of the governors on each academy governing body. Each academy has its own governing body who work with the academy Headteacher to check that the academy is making good progress. Each governing body has parent/carers representatives and a staff governor. 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 QMAT Trust. The governing body also draft the academy spending plan and improvement plan for approval by Vision Trust. The schedule of delegation is the same across each of the academies within the Trust.

What will happen to our school's funding?

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 has to break-even.

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 LA. Funding allocated to a named child would continue to be funded directly by the local authority.

Will the staff stay the same?

Yes. 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. Under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) –known as TUPE.

Will the terms of employment for staff change?

As part of TUPE arrangements, staff are entitled to transfer to the academy trust under the same employment terms and conditions. However, it is essential that the academy is able to respond to the changing curriculum requirements and educational demands.

What will happen with regard to staff pensions?

If you are a teacher in the current school, your pension will continue as part of the teacher's pension scheme, with the Trust continuing with the same employer responsibilities as the predecessor school. Support 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.

Will the Trust recognise and engage with our trade unions?

Yes. QMAT recognises the role of trade unions and sees positive engagement as critical to the transition process and ongoing success of the academy. They will play an important role in the consultation process on TUPE for staff.

Will the school remain non-selective?

Yes. Academies are required to follow the law and guidance on admissions, special educational needs 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 local children.

Can the academy work with the council and other schools?

Yes. Where possible, the academy will buy back services to support the local authority. The academy can work with any schools it wishes if this makes a difference to the education of the children.

Will the school have to change its name?

No. The school will not change its name, unless there is a compelling reason for this.

Will there be a new uniform?

No. In academies, this is decided on a school-by-school basis. There are no current plans to do this.

Finally, The Department for Education website contains a wide range of information about becoming an academy.

<https://www.gov.uk/types-of-school/academies>