

Converting to an Academy Q&A Document

WHY ARE WE LOOKING AT BECOMING AN ACADEMY?

1. What is an academy? Academy schools are state funded schools in England which are directly funded by central government (specifically, the Department for Education) and independent of direct funding and control by the Local Authority.

2. Are all academies the same? No. There are many different types of academy. For example, some schools have become academies independently, others have joined together with other schools to form a Multi Academy Trust (MAT) whilst others have joined larger groups and organisations, often known as academy chains. Different academies have a variety of school improvement and governance arrangements.

3. Why are we considering converting to an academy now? St Peter's is a Church of England Voluntary Aided Junior school. This means that we are currently state funded via our Local Authority, Derby City Council, but operate within the Church school system. The Church school system is managed and developed through individual Dioceses, and each Diocese has a Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) which is a statutory body. There are currently 111 church schools in the Derby Diocese, some of which are already academies.

The Diocese of Derby has established a Multi Academy Trust (MAT) called the Derby Diocesan Academy Trust (DDAT) to provide an academy option for its schools.

The current educational climate is changing and many schools nationally are choosing to take advantage of academy status, whilst others, like St Peter's are directed to become an academy as they are considered as eligible for intervention.

4. Are any other schools in our local area academies? Yes, there are a number of academies in our local area and region. Griffe Field Primary School is our closest DDAT school, they converted to academy status in January 2019. Arboretum Primary, St Chad's CE Nursery and Infants School, Hardwick Primary, St Werburgh's CE Primary School and Walter Evans CE Primary School are also members of DDAT and are located in Derby. DDAT has a growing number of member schools however growth of the Trust is managed carefully to ensure the correct mix of good and outstanding schools and those who require additional support to improve. However, all academies are different in the same way that every school is different.

WHAT DAY-TO-DAY CHANGES WILL HAPPEN?

5. Will a move to academy status mean a new name for the school? No. The school will continue to be called St Peter's Church of England Junior School. Other schools that have become academies with DDAT have also chosen to retain their existing names.

6. Will a proposed new academy have a new uniform? No. Parents will not need to buy a new uniform.

7. Will a proposed new academy still be open to the community? Yes. There will be no change to the current provision and use of the school by different groups to hold events.

8. What will be the impact on our children with special needs? There will be no change to the level of support provided. St Peter's will continue to recognise that every child is different and has the right to be included as a valued, respected and equal member of the school community.

9. Will the school hours be any different as an academy? Although it is highly unlikely that the school day will be changed, it is the decision of the DDAT Board to decide this as they have the power to do so. This decision is usually delegated to the local governing body of an academy, so there is no real change from our authority in this regard. As is the case now, parents would be consulted prior to any change in school hours, although no change is envisaged.

10. Will pupils' education be disrupted by a transition to academy status? No. When an academy is approved to go ahead, it will do so with minimal disruption to the staff and students. Most of the changes will take place behind the scenes with support from a dedicated team from DDAT, who have gone through this process before with other schools.

11. If we move to being an academy will this change what is taught? We would be expected to continue to offer the full range of National Curriculum subjects. OFSTED continue to inspect academies and their handbook for inspection is the same one as used in any other school. The academy would be expected to strive to be outstanding in both the statutory OFSTED (section 5) and the Church School (section 48) inspections. In other words, there may be no change in what or how pupils are taught; except that the move to becoming an academy is designed to ensure sustainable, secure and rapid improvement.

12. Would there be an increased emphasis on religion and Christianity in a DDAT academy? We would maintain our status as a Church School and the existing emphasis on our Christian values and ethos would not change. Church schools are also subject to the statutory (section 48) Church School Inspection and this also would not change.

WHAT WILL THIS MEAN FOR OUR SCHOOL FINANCES?

13. How is an academy funded? In maintained schools, including church schools, all revenue funding (building funding is slightly different) goes directly to the Local Authority. The Local Authority (LA) takes a proportion of the money from the school budget to provide essential services to the school and the rest is delegated under the Local Management of Schools. Schools can, and do, buy additional services from the LA and other providers. As a result schools currently depend upon the local authority for many services such as school improvement, HR, finance, etc. This has led to a dual system where the LA has taken the lead on school effectiveness whilst the Diocese has focused on the distinctive and inclusive characteristics of the school.

Academies will receive a similar level of per-pupil funding as maintained schools, plus funding to meet additional responsibilities that are no longer provided for them by the Local Authority (LA). With DDAT, the money that would have been provided to the LA to run the school is provided directly to DDAT. DDAT does retain some of the budget in order to provide services to the academy. Local authorities fund their core services in a similar way.

14. Does this improve on current funding arrangements?

Converting to an academy will not be to our detriment or advantage financially. Funding is available to cover the costs of the conversion process itself, which is provided by central government once the go ahead to convert has been approved. In addition, the MAT Board has access to capacity funding from the Department for Education as well as opportunities to bid for capital funding on an annual basis.

WHAT WILL THIS MEAN FOR TEACHERS AND STAFF?

15. What are the Terms and Conditions for staff? On conversion to academy status teachers and staff employed by the school will transfer with the same terms and conditions, via a formal TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment) process. In addition, conversion will not affect any union memberships.

16. Who will employ teachers and staff following conversion?

At present St Peter's teachers and staff are employed by the school's Governing Body. Following conversion, teachers and staff will be employed directly by DDAT.

17. Will DDAT employ non-qualified teachers? All class groups of pupils will be registered to a qualified teacher, as is the case in schools currently.

WHAT WILL THIS MEAN FOR STANDARDS?

18. Does DDAT have the capacity to raise educational standards? DDAT has established its own school improvement capacity for those schools choosing to become an academy which includes a Chief Executive Officer, School Improvement Director, and Senior School Improvement Officers. The School Improvement Director is an ex-Local Authority school improvement professional and Lead Inspector for Ofsted with experience in school improvement with all types of schools, a proven track record and capable of working at the highest levels. More information on the team is available here: <https://ddat.org.uk/people>

Collectively, the team is experienced and qualified to support and challenge schools in data analysis, teaching, behaviour, safeguarding, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, Christian distinctiveness, special educational needs and disabilities, and leadership and management. The school improvement package will include support and challenge for governance and the team are able to draw on further support from the Diocese and National Leaders in Governance as appropriate.

19. How will an academy raise achievement? The whole structure of DDAT's Multi Academy Trust has been designed to challenge and support schools in equal measure. We would receive a number of days of school improvement support from a school improvement professional, irrespective of whether the school is outstanding or inadequate.

These visits are not inspections but an opportunity for senior leaders to benchmark their judgments through shared lesson observation, work scrutiny, analysis of data, supported self-evaluation and school improvement planning. Indeed the outcome of these visits will confirm the development state of the school.

DDAT will intervene rapidly in schools that are underperforming or on a downward trajectory based on OFSTED criteria.