

# Chilton Primary School



Chilton  
Ferryhill  
Co. Durham  
DL17 OPT

Tel: 01388 720255  
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E-Mail: [Chilton@durhamlearning.net](mailto:Chilton@durhamlearning.net)  
School No. 2002

Head Teacher: Mrs A Pybus-Coates

Deputy Head Teacher: Mrs A Caine

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## Frequently Asked Questions about Academy Conversion

**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. Academies are self-governing.

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

- **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.

**Is an academy like a business?** No. A business makes profit for its shareholders. An academy is a charitable trust which cannot make profit.



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**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 an 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, they may wish to continue working the LA, other local schools and local partners.

**How does governance work?** A Multi-Academy Trust is led by Members and has a board of directors who are ultimately responsible for the work of the Trust and its academies. This Board of Trustees is responsible for appointing the majority of the governors on each academy governing body, including the post of Chair of Governors. Each academy has its own local governing body who work with the academy head teacher (or Principal) to check that the academy is making good progress. Each governing body has parent/carer representatives and a staff governor. The academy Principal 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 the Multi-Academy Trust.

The governing body has delegated powers from the Trust Board including the management of finance and property and the appointment of staff.



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**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, 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 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.

**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. However, it is essential that the academy is able to respond to the changing curriculum requirements and educational demands. This may therefore require consultation with staff and trade unions, once the academy has been established, on changes to terms and conditions of employment.



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**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. 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.

**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.

**Will the school need to change its name?** It is unlikely that a school will change its name - unless there is a compelling reason for this. Usually the school will simply call itself 'academy' rather than 'school'.

**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 there be a new uniform?** This is always decided on an individual school basis. However, no costs will be incurred by parents if a change of uniform is deemed necessary. It is more likely that the school will simply change the name on the existing uniform (from 'school' to 'academy'). In this case, parents should just purchase new uniform as, and when, required.

The Department for Education website contains a wide range of information about becoming an academy. In particular, the website has a FAQ section which can be found at:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/academies/primary/faqs>

