



## **Converting to an Academy Q&A Document and Questionnaire**

### **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. Academies were initially established through the Learning and Skills Act 2000. However, the number of schools converting to academy status only really started to gather pace following the passing of the Academies Act 2010. Between April 2011 and July 2012, the number of academies increased from 629 to 1,957 and by November 2013, the number of academies stood at 3,444.

**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?** Hardwick Primary School is a community primary school. This means that we are currently state funded via our Local Authority, Derby City Council. The Government has announced recently that it has aspirations for all schools to become academies outside Local Authority control. As an Outstanding school, Hardwick primary has a number of options (see above), and the Governors of the school have looked at a number of different scenarios. The Diocese of Derby has established a Multi Academy Trust (MAT) called the Derby Diocesan Academies Trust (DDAT) to provide an academy option for its schools and has extended its offer to Hardwick Primary School. Having considered the options, our Governing Body feel that joining DDAT will be positive for Hardwick as we will have the freedom and autonomy to carry on being the Outstanding school that we are, whilst an established and successful Trust will provide a number of high-quality services that as a stand-alone academy we would need to source and/or provide ourselves.

Although Hardwick is not a church school, our caring approach and community focus and ethos matches that of the Academy Trust. As an academy we will not become a Church school.

**4. Are any other schools in our local area academies?** Bishop Lonsdale CE Primary School is our closest DDAT School, they converted to academy status in the Summer of 2014. DDAT currently has a small but growing number of member schools: William Gilbert Endowed (Derbyshire), Newbold Church School (Chesterfield), Turnditch Primary (Derbyshire), St Giles (Matlock), Walter Evans (Derby) and St Laurence (Long Eaton). Hardwick will not be the only non-Church school member of DDAT as Firs Estate Primary School are also moving towards academy status as part of DDAT.



## **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 Hardwick Primary School. Other schools that have chosen to 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.

**8. What will be the impact on our children with special needs?** There will be no change to the level of support provided. Hardwick Primary School 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 will be 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 the Academy Trust, 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 retain its outstanding judgment in the statutory OFSTED (section 5) inspection. In other words, there may be no change in what or how pupils are taught.

**12. Would there be an increased emphasis on religion and Christianity in a DDAT academy?** No, there are no plans to change the current teaching of RE at Hardwick Primary School. DDAT expects that all its schools operate as caring and supportive organisations in line with the Christian ethos.



## **WHAT WILL THIS MEAN FOR OUR SCHOOL FINANCES?**

**13. How is an academy funded?** In maintained schools all revenue funding 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.

Academies 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?**

Academies are funded on an equivalent basis to maintained schools, therefore the money the school receives is calculated in the same way with an additional amount to cover the services that would have been provided by the Local Authority. Funding is available to cover the costs of the conversion process itself, which is provided by central government once the decision to convert has been approved. On a day-to-day basis, schools such as ours are charged less to belong to the MAT and we will also have opportunities to support other schools and to benefit financially from doing so. 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 Derby City Council 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 Hardwick Primary School teachers and staff are employed by Derby City Council. 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.



**18. Will the Board of Governors have less authority and control?** The composition and powers of the Board of Governors will be set out in a formal 'Scheme of Delegation' which allows the DDAT board to delegate responsibilities to the Local Governing Body. There will continue to be 2 Parent Governors on the Governing Body (as at present), together with Community Governors and a Staff Governor as well. That said, DDAT may appoint additional governors if required, and may step in if the Board of Governors is not performing its duties effectively. Our School and Governing Body have considerable freedom and responsibility to take commercial and strategic decisions without recourse to the Local Authority and this will not change substantially following conversion to an academy.

**WHAT WILL THIS MEAN FOR STANDARDS?**

**19. 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 Officer. 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.

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.

**20. 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 at least 6 days of school improvement support from a school improvement professional, irrespective of whether the school is outstanding or inadequate. This is more than we currently receive from the LA.

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.



## Let us know your views!

We want to know what you think about the proposed academy conversion. To take part in the discussion please complete the questionnaire below and return to the school office by 10<sup>th</sup> June 2016. Alternatively, you can complete the questionnaire online at

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/3JBQP68>

**1 Do you support the decision for the school to become an academy?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

**Comments:**

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**2 The proposal is that the school will be an Academy within Derby Diocesan Academies Trust. Do you agree with this partnership arrangement?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

**Comments:**

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**3 Do you have concerns about this proposal? If so what are they?**

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**4 Please indicate whether you are:**

- ☐ A member of school staff
- ☐ A pupil at the school
- ☐ A parent/carer of a pupil
- ☐ A member of the community
- ☐ A school governor
- ☐ Other (Please specify) .....

Please return your completed questionnaires to the school office by 10<sup>th</sup> June 2016.

## THANK YOU