

## **Stakeholder Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

### **WHY DO WE WANT TO BECOME AN ACADEMY?**

#### **1. 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 under the same framework as maintained schools. Academies are self-governing.

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

A Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) is an education charity, limited by guarantee and has member academy schools within it. The MAT is governed by Members and Trustees (sometimes known as Directors) with local governance included in its structure.

The Members and Board of Trustees comprise of individuals who have been specifically recruited for their skillset, ranging from those with education, finance and business experience to human resources, communications and legal.

Academies are still part of the community and serve children, young people and families in a particular area and retain the same responsibilities as any maintained school as part of the learning community. They continue to work in partnerships with other schools for the benefit of local communities.

The Trust is accountable for all the schools that are a part of it and is responsible for ensuring all children and young people are successful.

#### **3. How does governance work?**

The Board of Trustees are ultimately responsible for the work of the trust and the academies. However, they devolve much of the responsibility to the individual academies and their respective local governing body. Each academy has its own governing body who work with the academy Headteacher to check that the academy is making good progress and add additional challenge and scrutiny to the work of the school. The academy Headteacher is always a governor for the time they are employed in that role.

The governing body has delegated powers from the Trust Board which will include areas such as curriculum, teaching and learning, pupil outcomes/progress, SEND, and safeguarding.

#### **4. What is the role of the MAT Chief Executive Officer?**

They are the Accounting Officer for the trust and the strategic support for schools. The CEO is the key contact for the Regional Director and the DfE and acts as the point of first contact to ensure schools are not distracted from their core purpose of teaching and learning.

## 5. What are the reasons schools consider converting to academy status?

- To remain in charge of their own destiny as the government has a goal to encourage all schools to be academies or working towards academy status
- The Local Authority (LA) capacity is reducing and, in some cases, disappearing. Pooling the resources of a number of schools means we can re-create some of the services once received from the LA
- To develop the expertise of all staff to further improve effectiveness and outcomes for young people
- To generate financial efficiencies to invest back into the classroom for the benefit of all learners

## 6. Why are we considering converting to an academy now?

The current educational climate is changing and many schools nationally are choosing to take advantage of the benefits that becoming an academy brings. Many schools wish to make the move now to determine their own destiny and to make the changes when it is right for their own school.

As a successful school, gaining academy status would give us the autonomy to continue to develop and to maintain our high standards. Becoming part of a MAT will bring greater opportunities for working even more closely with other local schools and the wider trust community of schools.

## 7. What is Oak Trees Multi Academy Trust?

The trust was established in June 2017, Oak Trees Multi Academy Trust currently has twelve member schools:

Poulton Lancelyn Primary School (Bebington, Wirral); Church Drive Primary School (Bebington, Wirral); Egremont Primary School (Egremont, Wirral); Brackenwood Junior School (Bebington, Wirral); Stanton Road Primary School (Bebington, Wirral); Great Meols Primary School (Meols, Wirral), Greasby Junior School (Greasby, Wirral), Thingwall Primary School (Thingwall, Wirral), Heswall Primary School (Heswall, Wirral), Irby Primary School (Irby, Wirral), Black Horse Hill Junior School (West Kirby, Wirral), and Hilbre High School (West Kirby, Wirral),

Oak Trees MAT's mission and values are:

### Trust mission:

'Achieving Excellence Together'

### Trust values:

- ▶ Collaboration
- ▶ Expression
- ▶ Citizenship
- ▶ Inspiration

You can find out more about the Oak Trees MAT at [www.oaktreesmat.co.uk](http://www.oaktreesmat.co.uk)

**8. What are the advantages of becoming an academy?**

Our governors and headteacher believe that working together to ensure the highest standards across the trust is an exciting new proposition. We will also continue to actively work with all local schools and current partners, ensuring the best of both worlds. Oak Trees MAT has made it clear that academy status will not change the things that currently work so well for our school.

**9. What are the disadvantages of academy status?**

As an academy, there are a number of additional responsibilities placed on the school in terms of financial management and reporting. It is expected that on a day-to-day basis, pupils, their parents and carers, teachers and staff will not notice the difference if we became an academy. There will also be additional work for members of staff in the school office. Oak Trees MAT recognises these additional pressures and will provide the school with a significant amount of support from specialists who will be able to pick up the majority of this additional work.

**WHAT DAY-TO-DAY CHANGES WILL HAPPEN?**

**10. Will a move to academy status mean a new name for the school?**

No. The school will continue to be called Orrets Meadow School.

Please be assured that the character, ethos and values of our school would remain unchanged should academy conversion take place.

**11. Would becoming an academy mean a new uniform?**

No. Parents will not need to buy a new uniform.

**12. Would becoming an academy mean the school could 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.

**13. What will be the impact on our children with special needs?**

There will be no change to the level of support provided. We 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.

**14. 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 Oak Trees MAT board whether this is changed. This decision is usually delegated to the local governing body of an academy, so there is no real change in this regard. As is the case now, parents would be consulted prior to any change in school hours, although no change is envisaged.

**15. Will pupils' education be disrupted by a transition to academy status?**

No. If conversion is approved, it will happen with minimal disruption to staff and students. Most of the changes will take place behind the scenes, with support from a dedicated team from the trust who have gone through this process before.

**16. Will there be any changes to the Curriculum?**

No, we would be expected to continue to offer the full range of National Curriculum subjects. We will continue to ensure that what we teach is relevant to our pupils and their specific needs and continues to be broad and balanced.

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

**17. What about funding?**

The Department for Education via the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) meets the running costs for an academy. Academy funding is calculated on a like-for-like basis with local authority schools. Therefore, the academy will have a similar budget to when it was a maintained school. We already have greater freedom to procure services from other providers. In a MAT there are further opportunities to realise cost efficiencies across the network and 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.

**18. How will the school be accountable financially?**

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

**WHAT WILL THIS MEAN FOR TEACHERS AND STAFF?**

**19. What will be the terms and conditions for staff?**

On conversion, teachers and staff currently employed by Wirral Council will transfer with the same terms and conditions, via a formal TUPE (transfer of undertakings protection of employment) process, to become employees of Oak Trees MAT.

Pensions would transfer (including pension contributions).

If the school decides to progress with the conversion process a detailed discussion would take place with staff and Trade Unions and TUPE legislation would protect employees.

**20. Who will employ teachers and staff following conversion?**

At present, teachers and other school staff are employed by Wirral Council. Following conversion, they will be employed directly by Oak Trees Multi Academy Trust.

**21. Will staff have to reapply for jobs?**

No, staff will not need to reapply for jobs due to academisation. It is possible that we may have restructuring in future, whether we academise or not, but there is no plan for this as part of the current process.

**22. Will Oak Trust MAT employ non-qualified teachers?**

No. All class groups of pupils will be registered to a qualified teacher, as is the case in school currently.

**WHAT WILL THIS MEAN FOR STANDARDS?**

**23. Does Oak Trees MAT have the capacity to support our educational standards?**

The trust has established its own school improvement capacity for those schools choosing to become an academy - this includes a school improvement lead and regular use of education consultants.

Collectively, the team is experienced and well-qualified to support and challenge schools in data analysis, teaching, behaviour, safeguarding, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, special educational needs and disabilities, and leadership and management. The school improvement package will include support and challenge for governance and the team is able to draw on further support from national leaders in governance if appropriate.

**WHAT ABOUT TIMESCALES?**

**24. Can you withdraw from the conversion process?**

Yes, you can withdraw right up to the point the Funding Agreement is signed (approximately one month before the conversion date). Once this is signed there is a legally binding agreement between the Secretary of State and the academy, and the termination process would require a long notice period.

**25. What is the timescale for conversion?**

This will usually take 4-9 months, with conversions being official on the 1st of the month. It would be a smooth transition in which learners, staff and parents are unlikely to perceive any change, and no disruption to the normal running of the school. If we convert, the date would be determined with the Department for Education and we would let you know when it is confirmed.