

ACADEMY PROCESS: PARENT Q&A

1. WHAT IS AN ACADEMY?

Academies are independent schools, funded directly from central government, rather than a local authority. Academies control their own admissions process and have more freedom than other schools to innovate. Responsibilities in relation to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) remain unchanged.

2. WHY IS SIR FREDERIC OSBORN SCHOOL GOING TO BECOME AN ACADEMY?

Under government initiatives to raise standards in education, all schools in England will be recommended to convert to academy status by 2022.

4. WHO WILL OVERSEE THE ACADEMY?

The day-to-day running of the school will still be with the existing headteacher. The headteacher will continue to work alongside governors and the Academy Trust in order to continue to raise standards.

6. HOW WILL THE SCHOOL BENEFIT?

We will have access to the Trust's advice, support and expertise. This will be particularly beneficial for teaching staff who will meet to share resources to further improve the quality of teaching and outcomes for our students. We do not see this as a one way partnership, and neither do the Trust, as we have a lot to offer back.

Working with an outstanding school, which also takes a leading role in the Alban Teaching School Alliance; we hope that our partnership will support us when recruiting teachers, particularly in shortage areas, such as English, Maths and Science.

7. WHAT DOES THIS CHANGE MEAN TO PARENTS?

Whilst the management structure may change the principle of constantly improving the quality of teaching to benefit the students' life chances will not. Our vision to become an Outstanding school will remain.

All Academies must adhere to the School Admissions Code. Applications for school places will still be made to the LA

A new uniform will reflect the exciting launch of the Ridgeway Academy. We are working to minimise the costs of a new school uniform for parents.

3. WHO WILL MONITOR ACADEMY PERFORMANCE

Academies, like all schools, are inspected by Ofsted. Regional Schools Commissioners were introduced in 2014 to approve academy conversions and monitor standards of education at academies and free schools in their areas.

There are currently eight regional commissioners, who each work with a small board of headteachers. They cover a large geographical area and act on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education.

5. WHY JOIN THE ALBAN ACADEMIES TRUST?

Sir Frederic Osborn School has been working continuously with Sandringham School since 2014. Sandringham School is an Outstanding, mixed comprehensive school with an excellent track record. As lead school in the Alban Academies Trust it shares the same vision and values as ours in terms of the importance of developing positive attitudes, future leaders, and promoting academic excellence alongside developing the whole child. The advantage of working in partnership with an Outstanding school is that we can use their advice, support and expertise. This is particularly beneficial when recruiting teachers which can be extremely difficult. Finally, we did not want the Academy process to distract us from improving the quality of teaching and learning so we took control of the process and we approached the Trust to formalise our current working.

8. WHAT DOES THIS CHANGE MEAN TO STUDENTS?

On a day to day basis, this change is likely to go unnoticed by the students, with no plans to change the school day, school terms or age range.

We will have greater flexibility in relation to the curriculum we offer and will continue to offer a good level of support to students with special needs.

9. WILL THE SCHOOL DAY OR TERM CHANGE?

Although Academy status would mean the school would have complete autonomy on these decisions, there are no current plans to change.

11. CAN A CHILD WITH A STATEMENT/EDUCATION HEALTH CARE PLAN NOMINATE AN ACADEMY AS HIS OR HER FIRST CHOICE SCHOOL?

Yes, schools converting to Academy status can retain the admissions criteria they currently use. We have no plans to change this. These arrangements and related processes must at all times comply with the Schools Admissions Code.

12. IF THERE ARE MORE ACADEMIES, HOW DO LOCAL PARENTS HAVE A FAIR CHOICE OF SCHOOL?

Local Authorities continue to have overall responsibility for ensuring that there are sufficient places to meet demand locally and all academies are required to participate in the local coordination of admissions. Applications for school places are made to the Local Authority, who will notify the Academy of the application.

14. IF A SCHOOL BECOMES AN ACADEMY AND WANTS TO CHANGE BACK, IS THAT POSSIBLE?

If Sir Frederic Osborn agrees to become an Academy there is a legally binding agreement between the Secretary of State and the Academy, and the termination would require a long notice period (seven years).

16. IS EVERYTHING ALREADY DECIDED?

No. Applying, or even having the application accepted in principle, does not automatically mean that Sir Frederic Osborn School will become an academy. There is a period of roughly four months for further development, consultation and consideration of the issues. At any point up to the signing of the Funding Agreement, the Governing body or the DfE could decide to stop the process.

10. WILL YOU CHANGE THE ENTRY CRITERIA? WILL YOU BECOME SELECTIVE IN CHOOSING PUPILS? WILL YOU CHANGE THE CATCHMENT AREA?

All Academies are required to adopt clear and fair admission arrangements in line with the admissions law and the School Admissions Code. When a school converts to become an Academy, it will be the admission authority and is responsible for its own admission arrangements. This means the Academy will need to manage its own admission process. It will involve periodic consultation and regularly publishing the Academy's admission arrangements. Applications for school places will still be made to the Local Authority, who will notify the Academy of the application.

13. WILL THE SCHOOL HAVE ENOUGH MONEY TO PAY FOR THE SERVICES IT NEEDS?

Yes, the bottom line is that we will not be financially disadvantaged by a move to Academy status. Academies receive the same level of per-pupil funding as they would receive from the Local Authority, plus additional money to cover the services that are no longer provided for them by the Local Authority. The Government is clear that becoming an Academy should not bring financial advantage or disadvantage to a school. However, Academies have greater freedom on how they use their budgets, alongside the other freedoms that they enjoy.

15. WHOSE DECISION IS IT WHETHER OR NOT WE BECOME AN ACADEMY?

The decision to apply to become an Academy lies with the school's Governing Body. The decision to accept or reject the application lies with the DfE and the Regional School Commissioner.

17. HOW CAN I SHARE MY VIEWS?

We will be holding an information evening on 2nd October 2017 at 6.00pm where the Governing Body and Headteacher will be available to listen to your views and answer any further questions that you may have.

To allow us to make the necessary seating arrangements for the evening, please confirm your attendance via email admin@sfosborn.herts.sch.uk.

You can also write or email, the Governing Body at any time at governors@sfosborn.herts.sch.uk. Please put 'Academy Consultation' in the subject line in the email or on the front of the envelope, which can then be delivered to the school office.