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**CONVERSION TO ACADEMY STATUS**  
**AND JOINING A**  
**MULTI ACADEMY TRUST**

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**1. What is an Academy?**

Academy schools are publicly-funded schools that operate outside Local Authority control.

Academies receive their funding directly from the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) instead of from the Local Authority.

The Governing Body of St Francis' believe that becoming an academy and joining up with other Catholic schools as part of a multi academy trust structure is the right decision for the School - subject to the outcome of its consultation with the local community.

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

A Multi Academy Trust (also known as a 'MAT') is an organisation set up to run a group of schools who work together. The academies within a MAT keep their individual character as schools but are able to work with the other academies in the group to share best practice and expertise.

**3. What is the Our Lady of Grace Catholic Academy Trust?**

The Our Lady of Grace Catholic Academy Trust is a multi-academy trust set up by St Joachim's and St Helen's Catholic Primary Schools.

The Trusts Mission Statement is:

Schools within Our Lady of Grace Catholic Academy Trust are places where mercy is freely given; where everyone is welcome, loved, forgiven and encouraged to live the good life of the Gospel



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The Trusts objectives are:

- To develop the whole child ensuring Gospel Values drive their aspiration to serve their communities throughout their lives
- To ensure the long term sustainability and continuity of Catholic education in the local community
- To provide excellent high quality education and experiences for all those who desire a Catholic education, within the context of our changing society
- To foster a sense of collaborative learning and sharing for all across Trust schools; valuing the contributions of staff, governors and parents

#### 4. Will the school still have a Governing Body?

The MAT will be run by a Board of Trustees who will have responsibility for the strategic oversight of the MAT.

The Board of Trustees will put in place a scheme of delegation to establish an Academy Local Governing Body for each academy in the MAT - including for St Francis'.

The Academy Local Governing Body is essentially a committee of the MAT board. The scheme of delegation will set out the responsibilities of the Academy Local Governing Body and the areas where the MAT board have reserved responsibility for certain decisions.

The Academy Local Governing Body for each school will report back to the MAT Board of Trustees on areas such as finance, school improvement and risk management as the MAT Board has overall accountability for the way in which the MAT and the Academies are managed.

#### 5. What are the benefits of joining the MAT?

The Government is clear that the greater freedoms enjoyed by Academies are designed to allow schools to develop and to build on individual strengths in response to the needs of the community. We feel that the additional freedoms and flexibilities would enable the Governors to better secure the long term future of our School.

In addition to this we believe that the formal partnership with St Joachim's and St Helen's will have a number of benefits for the three schools. This includes a more targeted approach to the long term future of the schools, pooling of resources which will improve teaching and management practice within the schools as well as a greater control of our finances and better management of these for the benefit of children attending the schools. The MAT intends to maximise the use of resources to enable wider learning opportunities within the three schools.



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**6. How long will it take to become an Academy?**

The process to become an Academy can usually be completed within a school term i.e. 3 - 4 months.

**7. Does a school need to change its name to include the word 'Academy'?**

No, but they can do so. Schools can keep the same uniform/school badge/colours etc. with the existing school name.

**8. Can the community object to the school becoming an Academy?**

Governing Bodies must consult with community stakeholders over any proposals to acquire Academy status. To become an Academy, the Governing Body will be required to pass a resolution and should give due consideration to any representations made by staff and parents.

**9. How will Academies be regulated?**

All Academies continue to be subject to inspections by Ofsted.

The results of Academy schools' public exams will continue to be published.

All Academies are subject to and must comply with the ESFA Academies Financial Handbook.

The financial accounts of the MAT will be audited and copies made available to the ESFA which has regulatory oversight over Academies. The accounts will also be published on the Companies House website.

**10. Will the Local Authority have any role in schools now?**

Local Authorities will still have a duty to ensure that children in their area receive an education.

Local Authorities will still have overall responsibility for ensuring there are enough places to meet demand locally and will therefore continue to coordinate the admissions system, whereby school places are allocated, although Academies will be responsible for drawing up their admissions criteria in line with the Admissions Code.

Local Authorities will no longer be responsible for monitoring standards of Academy schools in terms of their performance and financial arrangements. Instead the ESFA will have regulatory oversight of the MAT and its Academies.



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**11. Will it cost the School anything to convert to Academy status?**

A grant (currently £25,000) is available from the Department for Education for expenditure incurred in connection with the process of converting. This is intended to cover legal fees, transferring staff and new signage and stationery (if necessary). Any unspent balance can be kept by the Academy and does not need to be returned.

**12. Will the school be worse off financially if it converts to become an Academy?**

The Government believes that becoming an Academy should not bring financial advantage, or disadvantage, to a school.

There is currently no evidence that a school would become worse off financially if it were to become an Academy.

Academies will continue to be funded per pupil. Academies are funded on a like-for-like basis with Local Authority maintained schools.

VAT on supplies to the Academy are directly refunded by HMRC.

**13. Who takes responsibility for pension arrangements?**

Teachers working in an Academy fall within the scope of the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS) just as if they were employed by the Local Authority. All current staff transferring from the existing maintained predecessor school would simply continue their membership.

Support staff in an Academy fall within the scope of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). Academies are obliged to continue to offer LGPS membership to staff transferring from a maintained predecessor school.



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