

Academy Conversion: Frequently Asked Questions – Updated 02.10.18

QUESTION	ANSWER
ACADEMIES	
1.	<p>What is an academy?</p> <p>An academy is a state school that is funded directly by central government and independent of the Local Authority. Academies benefit from greater freedoms to innovate and raise standards. Academies don't have to follow the national curriculum (as long as it remains broad and balanced), can set their own term times and are responsible for agreeing the pay and conditions of service for their staff. Academies must, however, follow the same rules on admissions, special educational needs and exclusions as other state schools.</p> <p>There are two types of academies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Converter academies include all schools that have chosen through Governing Body Resolution and application to the Secretary of State to become an Academy under the Academies Act 2010. Converter academies are successful schools that have chosen to convert to academies in order to benefit from the increased autonomy academy status brings. • Sponsored academies are all-ability, state-funded schools established and managed by sponsors from a wide range of backgrounds, including high performing schools and colleges, universities, individual philanthropists, businesses, the voluntary sector, and the faith communities. Sponsored academies are set up as a result of Government intervention to support under-performing schools with the aim of improving educational standards. The chosen sponsor is expected to bring added drive, expertise and capacity.
2.	<p>What is a Multi-Academy Trust?</p> <p>A Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) is a single entity established to undertake a strategic collaboration to improve and maintain high educational standards across a number of schools. A group of schools form a single MAT which has overarching responsibility for their governance. The MAT is accountable for the performance of each school in the group, although each can still have their own Governing Body which operates subject to delegation of power from the MAT. A master funding agreement with the MAT, and supplemental funding agreements with each individual school, is signed by the Secretary of State for Education.</p>
3.	<p>Why is Fearn's Community Sports College converting to an academy?</p> <p>Fearn's Community Sports College will become a sponsored academy. Star Academies has been identified to be the sponsor for the school and this choice has been welcomed and approved by the Governing Body.</p> <p>Star Academies has been chosen thanks to its track record of sustaining and improving schools, its core values and ambitions and aspirations for young people. Star will become Fearn's Academy sponsor, working with pupils, parents, staff and the community to support Fearn's on its improvement journey. You can find out more about Star here http://www.staracademies.org/.</p>

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4.	Who are academies accountable to?	Academies are accountable directly to the Secretary of State for Education. Regional School Commissioners monitor standards at academies and free schools in their areas. Academies are subject to inspections by the schools' inspectorate, Ofsted, in the same way as other schools are. Academies' performance results continue to be published, alongside those of other state schools in the DfE performance league tables.
STAR ACADEMIES		
5.	Who are Star Academies?	<p>Star is a mixed Multi-Academy Trust, running a diverse group of schools across the country. There are currently twenty-four schools within Star working together in five regions across the country known as Star Partnerships – Lancashire, Greater Manchester, West Yorkshire, the West Midlands, and London. Schools within the Star Partnership areas work together to share expertise and maximise opportunities and experiences for Star pupils.</p> <p>Star is a high achieving Multi-Academy Trust and all of the Trust's schools that have been inspected so far by OFSTED have been judged to be outstanding. Star schools also enjoy some of the best performance results in the DfE school league tables and, year upon year, Star pupils secure the lowest absence rates in England.</p> <p>All Star schools share a commitment to a child-centred vision and focus on educational excellence, character development and service to local communities.</p> <p>Star also supports many more schools and aspiring leaders through school improvement and leadership training via Star Institute, the Trust's centre for learning and development. Established to support and promote school improvement, the Institute aims to build a world class education workforce, not only for the Trust's own schools, but for other schools nationally and beyond. Fearn's will benefit from a national network of support, resources and opportunities, as we continue to improve educational standards for our students.</p>
6.	What are key characteristics of a Star school?	<p>Star Academies makes a 'Pledge of Excellence' to every parent or carer who chooses to send their child to a Star school. The pledge includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High expectations – Star creates a culture of high aspirations and sets ambitious targets for every pupil. • A high-powered, knowledge-based academic curriculum – Star's curriculum is broad and balanced with an emphasis on academic success. • Carefully focused traditional teaching, rigorous tracking and personalised intervention – Star believe in good teachers, with good subject knowledge who deliver intricately planned lessons. Star closely monitors progress, providing personalised 'catch-up' activities to ensure pupils meet their potential. • Highly qualified staff that are motivated, well-trained and using cutting edge research – Star provides extensive training and professional development opportunities to ensure staff deliver the very best outcomes for pupils.

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A rich and diverse leadership programme that grows character and inspires charitable and social action – every Star school adopts a Leadership Specialism designed to equip pupils to become the leaders of tomorrow in whatever field they choose to pursue.
7.	What are the benefits of Fearn's Community Sports College joining Star?	<p>Star makes a pledge to every school that chooses to become a Star academy. The pledge includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A skilled central team that works alongside schools to deliver educational excellence, operational excellence and a strong Star community – Star's Central Team will work to secure the school's long term health, providing support and guidance on HR, IT, Estates, Admissions, Governance and Legal. • High quality school improvement support – Star's education team will build leadership and teaching capacity within the school. • A collaborative approach to policy and systems development • An investment in staff wellbeing and continuous development – through Star Institute, Star Academies will provide a range of training opportunities for teaching and non-teaching staff to support staff's career development.
8.	What is Star's track record?	<p>All of the Trust's schools that have been inspected so far by Ofsted having been judged to be outstanding. Star schools enjoy some of best performance results in the DfE school league tables; this year Star's founding school was the top performing school in the country for progress, whilst its first free school, ranked third. Year upon year Star pupils also secure the lowest absence rates in England. The impact of our support is already beginning to pay dividends at our sponsored academies with increased performance. Over the last 3 years, there has been a significant improvement in key government measures.</p>
THE CONVERSION PROCESS		
9.	How long will the conversion process take?	The target date for conversion is February 2019.
10.	Will I be able to have a say?	<p>Yes. We are keen to hear from parents, staff and the local community. There will be a six-week statutory consultation process in which parents, carers, staff, governors and other stakeholders will be able to state their views on the proposal to convert to Academy status. The consultation period will run from Tuesday 25th September 2018 to Tuesday 6th November 2018, and there will be a variety of ways in which stakeholders can contribute. For more details, see the school website.</p>
GOVERNANCE		
11.	How is Star Governed?	<p>Star places great emphasis on robust governance. Star Governance Structure ensures there are clear reporting lines and explicit requirements to ensure probity, good governance and outstanding performance.</p>

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		<p>Star Members are responsible for determining the governance of the Trust. They approve the Articles of Association which set out the details for the Trust internal management, decision making and running of the Trust. The Members also appoint Trustees in accordance with the Articles.</p> <p>Star Trustees develop the overall strategy and vision for the Trust and ensure it is consistently delivered within our schools and operations.</p> <p>Schools that join the Trust constitute a Local Governing Body who continue to be responsible for monitoring the day-to-day operation of the school and are accountable to the Board of Trustees for the performance of their school.</p> <p>A Star Governance Handbook and Accountability Framework defines the distribution of rights and responsibilities amongst these different stakeholders and a Scheme of Delegation determines the functions undertaken by the Board of Trustees, identifying those which have been delegated to its Committees, the Central Office Executive, Local Governing Bodies and Principals.</p>
12.	Will the current Governors have the opportunity to remain at the school?	<p>Yes. Star is keen to work in partnership with those who have dedicated so much to the school already.</p> <p>At the point of conversion, the old school ceases to exist and new establishment is formed. As with any new school, the Academy will need to constitute a Local Governing Body.</p> <p>It is the Trust's preferred model for existing Governors to become Governors of the new academy, subject to due diligence checks. All existing Governors wishing to continue their role post conversion (or prospective new Governors) will be asked to put forward an application to become a Trust appointed Governor.</p> <p>Parent and Staff Governor elections will take place post conversion.</p>
FUNDING		
13.	How will the school be funded?	<p>Academies are funded on the same basis as maintained schools and receive annual funding allocations from the Department for Education via the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). Academies receive the same level of per-pupil funding as maintained schools receive from the LA, but they also receive an additional amount called the Education Services Grant, allocated to academies based on the number of pupils they are responsible for, to buy services no longer automatically provided by the Local Authority.</p> <p>The main change is that academies have greater freedom over how they use their budgets. As an academy, the school would therefore have more freedom to buy the services needed from a range of providers and obtain best value for money and the best quality services.</p> <p>All Star schools have their own individual budgets and are supported to manage these to ensure financial stability.</p>

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14.	How are schools and Star held to account on matters of finance?	Academies must operate systems which conform to the requirements of propriety and good financial management. These systems must meet the regulatory requirements of: Charities Act SORP; Companies Act; DfE; EFA; and the TET Board of Trustees. An academy must comply with the principles of financial control as outlined in the Academies Financial Handbook and apply the principles of best value to all financial and academy dealings. Requirements include producing annual accounts, annual internal audit arrangements and appointing a statutory (external) auditor to certify whether the accounts are true and fair. Academies continue to be inspected by Ofsted.
EDUCATION		
15.	Will Star bring in additional staff to focus on school improvement?	A School Improvement Lead will be assigned to the school to work alongside the Principal and senior and middle leaders to focus activity and develop capacity. The role of the School Improvement Lead is to provide extra senior leader capacity strategically and operationally to bring about rapid, sustainable and measureable improvements in standards and performance for pupils. Trust Improvement Leads for English, mathematics, science and inclusion will also be deployed on a needs-led basis.
16.	How long will it take to bring about real improvement at the school?	Star will start to work with middle and senior leaders immediately in order to maximise performance in the forthcoming GCSE examinations. We expect year on year improvements in exam results and the school to achieve Good or Outstanding at its first Ofsted Inspection in Year 3 following conversion.
17.	Will the curriculum change?	<p>We will build on the school's existing curriculum to ensure the curriculum is set up for success and maximises our performance in the Progress 8 measure. In providing a broad and balanced curriculum, we will also deliver a comprehensive vocational, sports and arts offer. All Star schools share a Leadership Specialism. We will work together to develop a curriculum tailored to deliver excellent academic results, but also designed to cultivate well-rounded, intelligent and socially-aware leaders. A well designed curriculum will be complemented by clear and strategically planned assessment, recording and reporting protocols. Regardless of background or prior ability, we aim to secure the best outcomes for all of our pupils, ensuring that our curriculum gives a solid foundation for future learning at every stage. We aim to equip pupils for the pathways that lead to university, the professions and success in whatever career they eventually choose.</p> <p>The school has some excellent sporting facilities and we will continue to ensure these are utilised as part of the curriculum and wider leadership specialism adopted by all Star schools.</p>
18.	What is the main priority? Where do you plan to start?	Star's main focus when working with the school will be on achieving educational excellence. Year 11 and 10 GCSE results are an immediate priority. You will also start to see increased expectations. The Trust, the school, the parents/carers and the pupils will be required to work together to improve outcomes. The goal will be to make lessons engaging and enjoyable so that all young people want to come to school and are ready to learn. Star staff will begin to work alongside school staff from October 2018 onwards.

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		<p>Planned intervention will continue, with further provision to support pupils as required. Our support will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing personalised learning and personal improvement plans for Year 10 & 11 pupils. • Extra classes/intervention after school and during holidays to maximise each pupils' progress. • Increased reporting to, and meetings with, parents to set out clear targets and action plans for success. • Enrichment programme to ensure that Year 10 and Year 11 leave school with memorable experiences.
19.	Will you focus on pupils' individual talents?	<p>Yes. We have very high expectations of all our pupils, staff and parents. We set ambitious progress and attainment targets for all our pupils based on their ability and prior attainment. Through the Gifted and Talented provision, we ensure that Gifted and Talented pupils are challenged and supported to excel, with stretching personalised targets in the classroom and tailored enrichment activities for all years that provides a comprehensive sports and arts offer.</p> <p>Our approach enables all pupils to play a full and active part in the life of the Academy, taking on leadership roles and experiencing special activities that will excite and challenge them.</p> <p>Like all Star academies, the school will adopt a Leadership specialism. Our Leadership offer will be designed to instil three interdependent leadership characteristics of Performance Leadership, Moral Leadership and Civic Leadership – characteristics that together ensure our pupils not only 'do their best' but 'do the right thing' and play a full role in society. We will provide our pupils with a unique learning experience, which gives them the skills and confidence to lead and manage in a variety of settings and situations. Focusing on service, teamwork, ambition and respect, our Leadership initiatives promote maturity, commitment and teamwork and enable our pupils to experience what it is like to stand up and take the lead.</p>
20.	Will provision still be in place for SEN?	<p>Provision for young people with special educational needs will be the same as it is now, or even better. Top up funding for pupils with a high level of need will still be channelled through the Local Authority, who will continue to monitor how this funding is spent to meet the needs of SEND pupils.</p> <p>Star has considerable experience in working with pupils with SEN and achieving outstanding success. We will draw on this experience and existing staff and Governors within the Star network, which includes a Head of Inclusion and a former Local Authority Director responsible for Access and Inclusion.</p>
21.	What will be done to improve attendance?	<p>Star schools have some of the best attendance rates in the country, and we find that implementing a robust Pastoral System – as well as creating an environment where pupils are happy, encouraged to aim high and are held accountable for their actions – results in improved attendance. There are no easy answers. We will work with the Pastoral Team to build upon and strengthen current systems and processes. These include daily phone calls, visits home and rewards to pupils that have good attendance.</p>

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STAFFING		
22.	Will the terms of employment change for staff?	<p>Where a school joins Star, there will be a legal change of employer and all employees assigned to the educational establishment of the School will transfer automatically to Star with effect from the conversion date.</p> <p>Their employer will change to Star Academies.</p> <p>TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment)) preserves an employees' terms and conditions when a business or undertaking, or part of one, is transferred to a new employer. All employees assigned to the educational establishment of the school at the time of conversion have the right to transfer to the Academy and to have their terms and conditions protected.</p> <p>Star Academies is committed to offering national terms and conditions in line with the school Teacher's Pay and Conditions document ("STPCD") and the Burgundy Book (for Teachers) or the NJC Green Book (for Support Staff). This commitment is protected via a Recognition and Collective Agreement between Star Academies and the national Trade Unions and Professional Associations.</p>
23.	Will there be a period of consultation? Will the Unions be involved?	<p>There will be a TUPE consultation process.</p> <p>Under TUPE, the current employer (and the Academy Trust where it is already incorporated and employs staff) must inform any recognised trade unions or elected employee representatives of the fact that the transfer is to take place, when it is to take place and the reasons for it.</p> <p>Staff will have the opportunity to meet collectively and individually with Star and Union representatives. This is expected to be around December 2018/January 2019. Star will seek to involve Trade Unions representatives throughout the consultation process.</p>
24.	What will happen to staff pensions?	<p>Teachers will continue to be part of the Teachers' Pension Scheme, with Star assuming the employer responsibilities of the predecessor school. Star also provides access for non-teaching staff to retain their membership to the Local Government Pension Scheme.</p>

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25.	What staff development opportunities do Star offer?	<p>Star Institute offers a range of development opportunities for both teaching and non-teaching staff. The Institute provides school-centred initial teacher training courses, along with training and support programmes for newly qualified and recently qualified teachers, which are designed to help them build confidence and strengthen their teaching practice. The Institute also has programmes for more experienced teachers who want to hone their pedagogy skills and keep themselves at the leading edge of teaching practice. We offer nationally-recognised qualifications and coaching programmes for those looking for pathways into leadership. Star Institute NPQML, NPQSL and NPQH programmes are accredited by the DfE, and there are also courses available for those who are aspiring to become Executive Headteachers.</p> <p>Star Institute has established partnership arrangements that provide access to CPD programmes for support staff, including courses and qualifications specifically designed for Teaching Assistants, and business qualifications for aspiring and existing School Business Managers.</p> <p>All staff will continue to have a personalised professional development plan that is reviewed on an annual basis.</p>
26.	Will there be a restructure?	We are not aware of any proposals to restructure the staffing. Any restructure taking place at the school will be separate to the academy conversion process. If the school embarks on a restructure, staff will be consulted and the appropriate procedures followed.
ORGANISATION OF THE SCHOOL		
27.	Will the term times change?	No. The school will continue to coordinate term times with other local schools for the convenience of parents and staff.
28.	Will there be any changes to the admissions policy?	<p>No. The school will remain subject to the Admissions Code and SEN Code of Practice. Star will become the Admissions Authority and could, subject to consultation, change the admission policy. However, we have no plans to do so and do not wish to disrupt current arrangements.</p> <p>The Local Authority will continue to co-ordinate the admissions. Parents will apply through the Local Authority for a place at the school in the usual way.</p>
29.	The school is experiencing low numbers on roll. How will this change?	<p>It is important that the school grows its pupil numbers. We will develop short term plans to increase the incoming Year 7 roll with longer term planning required for a further increase in numbers.</p> <p>We recognise the need for rapid improvement in results in order for the school to become more appealing and result in a growth in numbers. We will be providing immediate intervention, in collaboration with the senior leadership of the school to drive this improvement.</p>

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30.	Will the name of the school change?	<p>Yes. We believe a new name is important to mark a new chapter in the life of the school. The Trust is keen to ensure that any new name is rooted in the tradition and heritage of the school and the community it serves. Any new name would also need to reflect the mission and vision of the Trust and emphasise the school's leadership aspirations.</p> <p>We will work closely with the school staff and parents to identify the best outcome for the school.</p>
31.	Will the school uniform change?	<p>Yes. The uniform is an important part of building a strong identity for the school. Star will work with the school to establish an affordable uniform. The Trust will cover the cost of new uniform for all current pupils.</p>
SCHOOL ESTATE		
31.	Who will own the school buildings?	<p>Star will be responsible for the school buildings and land, under a 125-year lease.</p>
32.	What investment will be available to address the needs of the school?	<p>In the immediate term, we will be seeking some capital investment to prioritise urgent repair work and produce new signage, boards, and freshen up some of the internal school spaces.</p> <p>We will seek to put an investment programme in place in order to modernise the school estate over the next few years. We will also look to how we can make the school estate more efficient, but of course, our key priority will always be the quality of the education offer delivered by the school.</p>
PARTNERSHIPS		
33.	How do you envisage working with the community?	<p>Service to communities is key to the mission of all our schools. We encourage our pupils to become actively involved in the local community, primarily through charitable endeavours - fundraising, food banks, volunteering etc. We encourage a culture of "giving back" and ensure that our pupils are aware of the issues affecting their local communities. We also encourage parents, carers and the community at large to play an active role in the school's development, to ensure that all stakeholders feel that their views are being acknowledged and addressed.</p>

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34.	How will you involve parents?	<p>We encourage parents, carers and the community at large to play an active role in the school's development, to ensure that all stakeholders feel that their views are being acknowledged and addressed.</p> <p>Star is committed to engaging in ongoing dialogue with parents and aims to ensure that all parents take an active role in their child's education. Star will engage with and build on existing support such as the Parent Support Group, to ensure parents' opinions are regularly considered and factor into future decisions about the school. Post-conversion, Star will also seek to elect Parent Governors to the newly-established Local Governing Body.</p> <p>It is important to continue to improve the reputation of the school and encourage pupils and parents to view the school as the preferred choice in the community.</p> <p>We will build on the work already done by the school and continue with regular updates to parents by way of newsletters and the school's website, and parents will be provided with half-termly report cards documenting their child's progress. Performance Review Meetings for pupils falling below national expected levels will ensure parents play a key role in supporting their child's progress.</p>
35.	Will Fearn Community Sports College continue working with other schools as part of a leadership and school improvement partnership?	<p>The school and Trust remain committed to current local partnership arrangements and would expect these to continue post conversion. Star believes that all schools can benefit from collaborative partnerships and, moving forwards, the school will have access to a wider network of established education expertise - including a number of outstanding schools - in its improvement journey.</p>