

Edwalton Primary School

Further information for Parents/Carers regarding Academy Conversion

Responses to questions raised at parents' meetings held by other schools

- I'm interested in hearing about the Flying High Trust – what is it?
The Flying High Trust is what is known as a multi-academy trust – a group of primary academies working together in partnership with the aim that each one becomes an outstanding school/academy. The original member of the Trust is Cotgrave Candleby Lane School which is a teaching school and national support school. Further information about the Flying High Trust can be found at www.flyinghightrust.co.uk
- How does the headteacher feel about joining FHT?
The headteacher is very positive about joining the Trust. She has already worked closely with some of the schools in the Trust and is excited about the support the Trust can provide to move our school from good to outstanding.
- Are staff committed to it? How do staff feel about becoming an academy? Parents would be concerned if staff were being dragged into against their will.
Staff are being consulted and have met with colleagues from FHT. They have already enjoyed professional development opportunities provided by the Teaching School Alliance. They are feeling positive and looking forward to joining the Trust.
- Where does my 'middle of the road' child fit in?
The school will continue to value children of all abilities and ensure that they make the best possible progress. This is in keeping with the ethos of the Trust.
- What does becoming an academy mean in terms of the new primary national curriculum?
Although academies are free from the national curriculum, the Trust expects schools to base their curriculum on the national curriculum but to use the flexibility of being an academy to make the curriculum more relevant and interesting to our children. We will still be subject to the same national tests as all maintained schools.
- Does FHT have the expertise to manage the finances?
Yes we have a well-qualified Director of Business and Finance who supports schools across the Trust and ensures that finances are well managed. We are subject to external auditing and have to meet the requirements of the Education Funding Agency in terms of financial management.
- What will this mean for admissions? Concerned that school is oversubscribed and younger sibling will not get a place. Concerned that criteria might change and school become selective.
We will continue with the same admissions policy and criteria for allocating places. Should we feel the need to make any changes in the future we would need to consult with parents.
- Will there be any change to the uniform?
This is up to the individual school. The Trust does not impose a uniform on schools.

- What it will mean for the children?
We hope that they will get even more opportunities by being part of the Trust – for example the Trust has a Children’s Parliament.
- I thought academies were for failing schools – so why is the school becoming an academy?
Some schools which are failing are forced by the DfE to become an academy. These are called ‘sponsored’ academies. The majority of academies, however, are good schools which have chosen to become academies – these are called ‘converter’ academies. This school has chosen to become an academy because we think it will bring real benefits to the school.
- Why a multi-academy trust rather than just a single academy?
We feel that there are real benefits in working closely with a group of schools rather than in isolation as a single academy. A multi-academy trust provides support, economies of scale and the opportunity to develop and improve with like-minded schools.
- Will there be any changes to opening hours, holidays, etc?
No. We have no plans to make any changes to these. If we wished to do so in the future we would consult fully with parents.
- What will be the impact on funding – especially pupil premium?
We will receive the same amount of pupil premium funding from DfE. The Trust will take less of a top slice from our budget than the local authority but we may have to pay more for some services eg HR and legal. So the actual budget will not be significantly different but we will have much more flexibility in how we use it.
- With more opportunities for staff development, does this mean that children will have more supply teachers?
We will as ever manage the amount of time that teachers are away from their classes for professional development but it is vital that staff are able to access the highest quality development opportunities for the benefit of the children who they teach. Some of the opportunities provided by the Trust happen on INSET days and after school – and these do not impact on the need for supply cover.
- Will this school definitely become an Academy?
The governors propose that this school should become an academy within the Flying High Trust – a multi-academy trust of primary schools. The school, the Flying High Trust and the Department for Education will not take the final decision to proceed with the conversion and sign the Funding Agreement until parents and carers of children at the school and staff have had the opportunity to comment on the proposals through the consultation process.
- What is an Academy?
An Academy is essentially an independent school which is funded by the state. It is independent of the Local Authority and receives its funding direct from central government.

- What are the benefits of being an Academy?
The Flying High Trust believes that there are many benefits of becoming an academy, including:
More control over what we teach
More control over how we spend our school budget
More freedom to access the services we believe will best meet the needs of our children.
This is because our experience is that:
Academies receive their funding direct from central government – this means that academies have more freedom and control over their funding; they are independent of the local authority and none of the funding is retained by the local authority for the provision of central services;
Academies have more freedom over the curriculum taught – this means that academies do not need to teach parts of the National Curriculum which they do not consider to be appropriate for their pupils;
Academies have more freedom to undertake innovative projects – academies are charitable companies and so have more freedom to undertake innovative projects;
Being part of a multi-academy trust (like the Flying High Trust) – means that the school can draw on the support of a partnership of schools to continue its journey of improvement.
- Are there any disadvantages to becoming an Academy?
The Flying High Trust and the School will have additional responsibilities and costs for matters such as insurance, employment liabilities, pensions, health and safety, and property maintenance. However, as mentioned above, academies receive more funding from central Government to help them meet these additional costs. Others believe that there are more disadvantages – for example see:
<http://antiacademies.org.uk/place/nottingham/>
- Would the name of the school change?
We are not proposing to change the name of the school. This is up to the school – the Flying High Trust does not require the school to change its name.
- Would there be a change to school hours and holiday dates?
No, we have no plans to change current arrangements. Should we wish to in the future we would have to consult fully with you.
- Would the admissions arrangements change?
We have no intention of changing the current admission arrangements. As a community school admissions arrangements are currently set by the local authority, and the local authority also decides which pupils should be offered places at the school. As an academy, the Flying High Trust will be in a position to put in place admission arrangements, and decide which pupils should be offered places in accordance with those arrangements. The Flying High Trust will still be bound by the national Admissions Code, and Admissions Appeals Code. **The current admission arrangements will remain in place for the foreseeable future.** If the Flying High Trust wanted to change its admission arrangements we would be required to consult fully with you in accordance with the Admissions Code.

- Would becoming an academy have an impact on the support we receive from school eg free school meals?
No. We have a statutory duty to provide free school meals for those children who qualify for them. Flying High Trust will maintain and seek to improve other current levels of support.
- Would there be any changes to the buildings and school site?
No