

Rothersthorpe C of E Primary School

CONVERSION Q AND A

SECTION 1: Academy Information

What is an Academy?

Academies are publicly funded independent schools that are not managed by a local authority but their funding and accountability is directly with the Department for Education (DfE).

When will Rothersthorpe C of E Primary School become an Academy?

The planned conversion date is September 1st 2022.

Why is Rothersthorpe C of E Primary School proposing to become an Academy?

The Governors of Rothersthorpe C of E Primary School together with the Diocese of Peterborough, West Northants Council (WNC) and Department for Education (DfE) began evaluating the options open to the School to enable it to continue to move forward.

All three parties agree that joining Innovate Multi Academy Trust as a converter academy is the best course of action for the long-term benefit of pupils and staff at the School.

Is Rothersthorpe C of E Primary School being forced to become an Academy?

No. The Governors of Rothersthorpe C of E Primary School have undertaken a due diligence exercise on the options available to them, and together with the DfE, Diocese and WNC jointly concluded that becoming an Academy and joining Innovate Multi Academy Trust will provide the School with access to the school improvement support and capacity it needs.

What is Innovate Multi Academy Trust?

Innovate Multi Academy Trust is a Multi Academy Trust (MAT) – a single charitable company responsible for the running of 4 academies. The Innovate Multi Academy Trust Board is ultimately accountable for the quality of education in all Innovate Multi Academy Trust schools, as well as being the responsible for the use of public money, the employer of all staff and for the use of all Trust sites under the various leases.

Innovate Multi Academy Trust is based locally and is committed to providing excellent primary education. The Trust has 4 schools in Northamptonshire - Badby Primary School, Kilsby Primary School, Weedon Bec Primary School and Woodford Halse C of E Academy.

How does Innovate Multi Academy Trust (iMAT) work?

Each School in the trust has a Local Governing Body (LGB) who support and challenge the school leadership team who are responsible for the day to day running of the School. These LGB have powers delegated from the iMAT Board under a Scheme of Delegation.

The iMAT Board expects the Local Governors of Rothersthorpe C of E Primary School to fulfil many of the functions of the current Governing Body, with particular reference to the quality of education and all aspects of support for pupils.

The iMAT Directors act through the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Antony Witheyman, to offer both support and challenge to the Schools. The challenge is to ensure pupil progress continues to be good, standards rise and the school is maintained safely.

Support comes through a genuine partnership of schools in the Trust working collaboratively together. This is already underway and realising benefits for all existing iMAT schools.

Each school has its own School Development Plan focusing on the quality of education and this forms part of the overall Trust Action Plan.

The ethos of iMAT is 'Every School a Great School - Through an approach to learning which has exploration and personal discovery at its core, we are building a family of collaborative, resourceful and resilient learners who will face the future with passion, determination and tolerance.; all iMAT schools are equal partners in a shared overall aim of improving outcomes for pupils.

Each school is seen as central to its own community with the skills of each being used in a supportive way for all the others regardless of their current educational grading.

Joining the Innovate Multi Academy Trust will bring the following benefits for Rothersthorpe C of E Primary School:

- Sharing of best practice across all schools in the Trust;
- Greater resilience to future risks by joining a Trust containing 4 other Schools;
- Opportunities to benefit from shared services in terms of back office and procurement of goods and services to reduce costs and free up more resources for use in the classroom; and
- Improved recruitment and retention of the most skilled teachers and leaders attracted by the opportunities that a wider successful Trust organisation will bring.

The Trust is very clear that the individual ethos and character and good practices of each school are retained and that all the schools operate as equals supporting each other.

The CEO of the trust is working with the Headteacher, Mrs Nicola Fountain on the conversion of Rothersthorpe C of E Primary School and its integration into the Trust for September 1st 2022.

Why is there a consultation?

The Academies Act 2010 requires Governors to consult "such persons as they think appropriate" on whether the school should become an academy.

The Governing Body has agreed to work jointly with Innovate Multi Academy Trust to consult with all key stakeholders about the academy conversion including parents, staff, pupils and other schools.

Does the school need agreement from the Local Authority to become an Academy?

No. The Academies Act 2010 has removed the need for the Local Authority to approve plans for the school to become an Academy. However, West Northants Council has been fully involved in the process which has culminated in the decision that the School should join Innovate Multi Academy Trust.

What form of relationship will exist between the Local Authority and the school?

This is for individual Academies or Multi Academy Trusts to determine – there is no statutory requirement for any formal relationship between Local Authorities and Academies. Academies are directly funded and accountable to central government (Department for Education and the Education Funding Agency).

The Local Authority retains statutory duties for aspects of Special Educational Needs and disabilities, admissions coordination and provision of home-to-school transport. Local Authorities are also expected to play a key strategic role locally in areas such as pupil place planning admissions and sharing good practice.

However, Rothersthorpe C of E Primary School has a good relationship with West Northants Council and we expect this to continue after it has joined iMAT.

Will the school change its name and uniform as some Academies have done?

No. The school will not change its name or uniform after it becomes an academy. Over time the school will adopt a new logo to identify it as a member of the trust.

Are Academies subject to the same Ofsted inspection regime?

Schools converting to Academies will continue to be inspected in the normal way.

What are the governance arrangements for Innovate Multi Academy Trust?

iMAT has a Board of Directors currently comprising school representatives plus community representatives selected for the skills and experience they bring to the Board.

Most day to day operations of the School will be delegated to the Headteacher and the Local Governing Body (LGB) under a formal Scheme of Delegation from the trust Board. The LGB will typically include staff, parents and community representatives appointed by the Trust Board for the skills and experience they bring.

What is the process for Rothersthorpe C of E Primary School to join iMAT?

As Rothersthorpe C of E Primary School is proposing to join an existing Multi Academy Trust, there is no need to set up a separate company. However, the conversion process includes the following key legal processes:

- Putting in place a Supplementary Funding Agreement between Innovate Multi Academy Trust and the Secretary of State for the running and funding Rothersthorpe C of E Primary School;
- Transferring the employment of the staff from the local authority to iMAT following a statutory process (TUPE);
- Agreeing a Commercial Transfer Agreement for the transfer of assets and contracts from the local authority to iMAT; and
- Arranging a 125-year lease to transfer the use of any land and buildings owned by the local authority and supplemental agreements with School Trustees and Village Hall Committee/Parish Council.

Does Rothersthorpe remain a Church of England school?

Yes the church will still appoint governors and it will be subject to a church school inspection just as it is now. iMAT has two Church of England within its MAT currently.

SECTION 2: Staff Issues

Does the school have to hold consultation with staff?

Under employment legislation the Local Authority which is the current employer will need to conduct a TUPE* consultation with all staff (both teaching and non-teaching) and the relevant unions as part of the staff transfer process.

(*TUPE = Transfer of Undertaking – Protection of Employment)

Can the school alter teachers' pay and conditions?

The terms and conditions of staff are protected on transfer under by the TUPE regulations. Academies do have the freedom to vary terms and conditions from national ones but the Innovate Multi Academy Trust does not have any plans to do this.

If the school becomes an Academy, who takes responsibility for the pension arrangements?

Teachers working in an academy fall within the scope of the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS), just as if they were employed in a Local Authority maintained school.

Non-teaching staff at schools can join the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). This is administered by West Northants Council as at present. Employees will pay the same rate as at present under both schemes, subject to any nationally imposed changes.

How will the TUPE process work and what specific responsibilities does the school have?

As the current employer West Northants Council is responsible for informing and consulting with staff.

Innovate Multi Academy Trust is responsible for informing the employer of any 'measures' which will impact on their employment. There are none planned in this case. The Academy Trust writes to each member of staff confirming that they will transfer under existing terms and conditions.

SECTION 3: Finance

Will we get more money as an Academy?

Academies receive the same amount of per-pupil funding as they would receive from the Local Authority as a maintained school.

The Government is clear that becoming an Academy should not bring about a financial advantage or disadvantage to a school. However, academies do have greater freedom to decide how they use their entire budget.

SECTION 4: Admissions

Will becoming an Academy affect our admissions arrangements?

No. iMAT fully co-operates with West Northants Council and takes part in the unified admissions process. Parents can continue to apply to Rothersthorpe Church of England Primary School in the usual way by including the school as one of their choices on the WNC Admissions form.

Will Academies have to be a part of the annual coordinated admissions scheme? E.g. when the LA needs to find places for families relocating to the area etc.

Yes - Academy Funding Agreements require them to be in local coordination. That means although the academy will apply its own admission arrangements, the LA will send out offers of places. The West Northants Council also coordinates admissions for in-year applications and applications for year groups other than the normal point(s) of entry. This will not affect the Academy's right to determine which applicants have priority for admission. Academies are also required through their Funding Agreements to participate in local fair access protocols which help to ensure that no child is without a school place.

Can new Academies decide to bring in academic selection?

No, there will be no expansion of selection. Schools which already select some or all of their pupils may continue to do so when they become Academies, but schools becoming Academies cannot decide to become newly selective schools.

SECTION 5: Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Will our responsibilities in relation to Special Educational Needs, disabilities and exclusions change?

No. Responsibilities as an Academy in relation to Special Educational Needs, disabilities and exclusions will be just the same as they are now as a maintained school.

Can a child with an Education Health Care Plan, (EHCP) nominate an academy as their school of choice?

Yes. These arrangements and related processes must at all times comply with the School Admissions Code and responsibilities as an Academy in relation to Special Educational Needs will be just the same as they are now as a maintained school.

Does becoming an Academy change the way in which exclusions are dealt with?

Academies are required by their Funding Agreement to follow the law and guidance on exclusions as if they were maintained schools. This includes reporting exclusions to the Local authority. However, Academies do not have to consult the Local Authority before deciding to exclude a pupil and they can arrange their own independent appeals panel.