

Academy status Positives and negatives

What are the implications for the work load of the school staff and governing body?

+	Greater workload but with a greater freedom with regards to running the school.
-	<p>Before the change of status, the headteacher and bursar as well as the governing body will have to undertake additional work to gather information and undertake all the necessary consultations.</p> <p>After the change of status, due to the greater responsibility, the workload for governors, head and bursar will be greatly increased.</p>

What are the financial implications for the school? Can we afford to undertake/buy in services we were getting from the LA?

+	<p>The academy will not be tied to LA services and processes.</p> <p>The academy can use other companies in order to get the best value for money.</p>
-	<p>The initial work regarding the change if status will be costly in terms of legal and financial advice. The DBE will expect their additional legal costs to be met.</p> <p>Services may well cost more (even if taken from the LA).</p> <p>The LA undertook the 'value for money' process on behalf of schools – this burden now falls to the school.</p> <p>Researching services will require extra work.</p>

Do we have the knowledge/skills to write a viable business plan?

+	Members of the governing body/headteacher/bursar have the necessary skills.
-	The governing body may need to buy in services to write the business plan.

Can we get the written consent of the trustees and those who appoint foundation governors? Who are they?

+	The DBE/PCC/trustees are happy to consent as there are no complications over the change.
-	The DBE/PCC/trustees may not consent due to the specific situation of the school.

Who will we consult? How will we deal with their views? What impact will it have on our decision? Have we thought about the need to contact Trade Unions?

+	Staff and parents may be positive and keen to be part of an academy.
-	Staff may be nervous of the change due to: fear over lack of security regarding future pay and conditions /extra workload on curriculum development/worry regarding gaining a future post in another school if the academy has moved away from the National Curriculum. Parents may not wish their children to be educated in an academy.

If we become an academy what implication does it have for our neighbouring schools?

+	As an outstanding school there is an expectation that the school will support another less successful school. This may lead to greater cohesion and working practices in the area.
-	Other schools may resent the change of status and relationships may become fragmented. Without the LA schools do not have a common group in which to work together (the church school family will still offer this support).

It is recommended that the founding members are corporate rather than individual (DBE, Trustee, PCC) due to the liability of the members. Who will be the founding members (at least 3)? Who will be the governors?

+	The corporate nature means that no one is personally liable. With the DBE, PCC and Trustees as founding members and foundation governors being in the majority the church school distinctiveness will be maintained and developed
-	The extra work load and responsibility may make it difficult to recruit governors.

Will the governing body of the new academy trust have the skills and time to monitor standards and ensure the academy provides quality education?

+	The governing body has the necessary skills and has successfully identified trends in data and put actions in place before any LA intervention
-	Although governors already monitor standards. Without the LA the governing body will need to monitor standards and trends in more detail. Ensuring that any issues are immediately raised and dealt with. This has an impact on training as governors will have to be able to read data in an effective way and be able to challenge the education professionals and not depend solely on advice from their SIP. Governors will need to purchase advisory support where this is required.

Will the governing body of the academy trust have the required knowledge and skills to oversee financial and personnel responsibilities?

+	The governing body has the possibility of employing a business manager (or already does employ a business manager) who can readily oversee the work without having to answer to LA regulations.
-	The governing body will have to finance a business manager or other person with the relevant financial and personnel experience.

Are we prepared for the more extensive and demanding role of governors as directors of the academy trust and the greater liabilities they face?

+	The governing body has the necessary skills and commitment to take on the more demanding role Governors may be able to buy in personalised training for the governing body
-	Present governors may step down and filling the vacancies may prove difficult due to the increased burden of responsibility and work load. Governors will need to identify training requirements and find a source of governor training to develop skills. Personalised training will be expensive.

Are the staff and parents prepared for accepting the governing body's increased control and responsibility for the school and the learning that takes place?

+	Staff and parents have confidence in the governing body's skills and are keen to move away from the LA's control.
-	Staff and parents do not feel comfortable with the increased power of the governing body with no LA back up. As governors change the staff and parents may lose confidence in the governing body.

Have we identified which land and property we use exclusively or with others and who owns it?

+	We can easily obtain this information
-	This will involve extra work and finance to look into land and property issues.

Are we aware of the financial outlay and extra work needed when dealing with land transfer and leases?

+	We are aware and have planned and budgeted accordingly.
-	For church the land issues are a big stumbling block in the process. It will require governor, staff and DBE time to secure the necessary paperwork which will incur expense. Legal advice will need to be sought which will impact on the costs of transferring. The Trustees and DBE cannot allow any academy to go ahead unless the necessary safeguards regarding the land and its use as a church school are in place.

**Are we aware that any third party contracts will not be transferred to the academy?
Do we know where to source the services we currently have via the LA?**

+	There is the possibility of cancelling unprofitable contracts and the academy will be free to choose third party suppliers that may have been unavailable before.
-	Extra time and work will be required to constantly ensure best value for money is used.

Are we and the staff prepared for going through the TUPE transfer regulations?

+	Staff will feel secure that their current terms and conditions are safeguarded.
-	The TUPE process is lengthy and will require expert advice

Have we considered the risk involved in the transferred responsibility of pensions (particularly with regard to support staff)?

+	For teachers any liability regarding past pension shortfall will not be incurred by the academy.
-	Any future liability will be incurred by the academy and any past shortfall with regards to support staff involved in the LGPS will also be the responsibility of the academy

Have we thought about succession planning? Will we be able to find a suitable principal for the academy in the future – especially if we are a small school?

+	The school may appear more popular as an academy due to the freedom it may suggest for possible leaders
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-	<p>The lack of security and LA support with extra responsibility may make the academy less attractive to possible leaders especially if it is a small school with a tight budget (small schools should also consider what would happen if they currently have a teaching head).</p> <p>As a principal of an academy with the extra risk and responsibility any possible leaders may expect a higher salary</p>
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Admissions – can we cope with the extra work if we are a VC school? If we are a VA school how will we ensure our local church family is served?

+/-	<p>The freedom to choose admission criteria may seem attractive however academies must follow the admissions code and unless they already have faith places must serve the local area.</p>
-	<p>The LA will still co-ordinate the admissions process so for VA schools there will be no change and for VC schools it will entail the extra work required in ranking applications and dealing with appeals.</p>

Have we considered the impact of any future change in pupil numbers on the overall budget of the academy?

+	<p>Freedom of budget means it may be easier to balance the budget in the face of falling rolls.</p>
-	<p>As the budget is based on pupil numbers and there is no back up from the LA there is the possibility of serious financial problems if the academy faces falling rolls to the extent that the academy could fail (small schools should take particular note of this).</p>

If we are a VA school what extra freedom would we have?

+	<p>More freedom over budgetary decisions.</p> <p>The governors will not have to find the 10% towards capital costs.</p>
-	<p>The extra support from the DBE with regards to building work will not be available free of charge.</p>
+/-	<p>Admissions will not change.</p>

Have we considered our duty to maintain the purposes of our Trust and the continuation of the religious character and ethos of the school?

+	<p>The school has a strong Christian ethos and the governing body will guarantee this continues.</p>
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-	The school's Christian distinctiveness needs to be developed and we may struggle to find foundation governors to fill the role and ensure this continues to be a priority.
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Are we aware that once we have changed to an academy we cannot revert back to a maintained school?

+	This is the status the school, church and local community desires and they are committed to following it through.
-	If the academy struggles financially or academically there is no back up from the LA and it may lead to the closure of the academy

How will becoming an academy add extra value to the lives and learning of our children?

This is the most important question to ask when deciding on whether to pursue academy status.

+	The school feels that the extra freedom regarding curriculum and budget will help develop the vision for the school and ultimately improve the lives and learning of the children.
-	The school already successfully develops children in all aspects of their lives and changing status is not worth the extra work and risk involved.

Governing bodies should ensure they have explored these issues in detail before taking any further steps towards academy status.