

What are Academies?

Academies are publicly funded independent state schools that provide a first-class education.

What's different about academies?

Freedoms

Academies benefit from greater freedoms to innovate and raise standards. These include:

- freedoms around the delivery of the curriculum
- freedom from local authority control
- the ability to set their own pay and conditions for staff
- freedom to choose services more freely in an open market
- the ability to change the lengths of terms and school days.

Trust Status

Academies have to have a Trust or Sponsor. These can come from a wide range of backgrounds including successful schools, businesses, universities, charities and faith bodies. Sponsors are held accountable for standards in the school and the sponsors, vision and leadership are vital to each project.

As an established and successful school, Newton Longville would have the Diocese of Oxford Education Board as its Trust. The school has been under the auspices of the Diocesan Board of Education because it is a Church of England Voluntary Controlled school; becoming an Academy with the Diocesan Trust would strengthen and increase the support received from the Diocese.

Funding

Academies receive the same level of per-pupil funding as they would receive from the local authority as a maintained school, plus additions to cover the services that are no longer provided for them by the local authority. However, academies have greater freedom over how they use their budgets to best benefit their students.

At our local level, an amount is deducted from all schools' budgets which goes to fund central services for schools at Buckinghamshire County Council. This money is then used by the LA to support schools in Bucks and much of it is applied on a need basis. Newton Longville does not receive extra funding due to issues such as ethnic minority, social deprivation, low standards etc. It would therefore appear that by getting the funding directly before it is top sliced we will have more funds in our budget.

Academies receive their funding directly from the Young People's Learning Agency (an agency of the Department for Education) rather than from local authorities.

Governance

The principles of governance are the same in academies as in maintained schools, but the governing body has greater autonomy. Academies are required to have at least two parent governors. As an Academy under the Diocesan Trust there would be an increased proportion

of Foundation Governors appointed by the Trust in agreement with the local Parochial Parish Council

... and what's the same

Admissions, special educational needs and exclusions

Academies are required to follow the law and guidance on admissions, special educational needs and exclusions just as if they were maintained schools. However they manage their own admissions procedure and therefore will not have to wait for the County Council to do the processing which can be slow and complicated particularly if the family lives in a different Council area from the school.

An Academy remains a school which serves all the children in the community and cannot select on a basis of ability. Newton Longville will continue to offer places to all children who apply regardless of ability, religion, race, etc. In the event that applications exceed capacity exactly the same criteria as present will be applied.

Collaboration

Academies have to ensure that the school will be at the heart of its community, collaborating and sharing facilities and expertise with other schools and the wider community.

The Department of Education expects all high-performing schools applying for academy status to partner a weaker school. Collaboration and partnership are now embedded in the school system, and this is also the case for academies.

Newton Longville has been deemed as Good by Ofsted, which is why it is in the position to choose to convert to Academy status. The collaboration required in supporting another school will mean that it will have to continue to be reflective of its own practice, ensuring the maintenance and further development of excellence.

Newton Longville School has always encouraged community use of the school's facilities and currently there are several groups e.g. Beavers, Cubs and Scouts, Karate Club and the Ballroom Dancing Club who use it regularly, as well as groups and individuals who use it intermittently. As Academies have a duty to collaborate with the community, this will simply ensure that this must continue in the future.

Standards and Attainment

An Academy continues to be inspected by Ofsted and continues to be accountable for the quality of education and provision. Freedom in the delivery of the curriculum still requires the National Curriculum to be taught but allows greater opportunities to make decisions on how it is taught in a way which suits the children and locality more appropriately.

Transition to Secondary

Newton Longville will continue to be part of the Buckinghamshire transition process which includes the 11+ for allocation of Secondary School. There will be no change to the current process or choices of schools.

Freedom of information

The Freedom of Information (FOI) Act (2000) applies to academies as it does to maintained schools.

These are some FAQs from Parents' comments and questions at other schools' consultations

Question

In my experience teachers care passionately about the education of our children-do the majority of the staff want to change to an academy?

Response

We are consulting the staff and the unions about their views on Academy Status. These views will be fed back to the Full Governing Body via the Governors' Working Party.

Question

What happens if the funding is reduced or disappears after a year (or 2, or 3...)?

Response

We have no guarantees with regards to funding for future years either from the Local Authority or from the Department for Education with regards to Academies.

Question

Will the resulting reduction of funding to the local authority have a detrimental effect on other schools?

Response

We are not in a position to answer this question. It would need to be answered by the Local Authority.

Question

How vulnerable to political change will the status of an academy be?

Response

We have no idea what the future will hold politically both for Local Authority Schools or Academies

Question

If the country believes that responsibility for education should be taken away from local authorities wouldn't it be better to implement this change across the board?

Response

We are not in a position to answer this question but you could direct this to the Department for Education.

Question

By becoming an academy, what specifically will the school be able to do to improve the quality of my daughter's learning which at present is not possible?

Response

Academy Status will enable us to maintain the current curriculum, provide extra- curricular opportunities, and the present staffing levels which we provide for our students at the moment.