

What is an Academy?

Academies are classed as independent state schools, which have the freedom to determine their own policies on such things as the curriculum taught, school hours, term dates and staff pay. This is enabled by the Academies Act 2010. Primary, secondary and special schools are all able to apply to convert into an academy and are accountable to the Secretary of State - not the County Council.

Academies are managed by their own Academy Trust and are not the responsibility of the Council. Academies are given directly the money what would have been given to the Council so academies can choose how to spend the money.

Who runs an Academy?

The academy is run by an Academy Trust. This is a legal body which operates as a charitable organisation and a company limited by guarantee. The Trust has a formal agreement, or contract with the [Department for Education](#).

Who decides which schools convert to an academy?

The decision for any school to become an academy rests with its governing body.

Can a faith school i.e. a Voluntary Aided/Controlled school or Catholic school become an Academy?

Yes, but this is subject to the prior agreement with the Church of England or Catholic Diocese.

Are there any rules relating to admissions that academies and maintained schools have to follow?

Yes. Academies have to follow the law for school admissions, special educational needs and exclusions as if they were a maintained school.

My child has special education needs. How can I be confident that they will be given the same level of support, attention and care?

The Academies Act 2010 requires Academies to follow the same statutory framework for special needs as local authority schools.

Schools will receive funding for children with statements of special educational needs in the same way, whether they are academies or local authority schools. If children have statements with an enhanced package of support, both types of school will get additional funding directly from the local authority, again, in the same way.

Where children have special needs, but do not have a statement, once again, academies are required to have regard for the [Code of Practice on SEN](#), in exactly the same way as local authority schools. This means that in both types of school, children will be supported at school action or action plus, according to the level of need and involvement of external agencies.

Are there different types of academies?

Yes. Schools can convert on their own, as 'single converters' or alternatively convert as part of a group of schools. We refer to these group arrangements as Multi Academy Trusts, Umbrella Trust and Loose Groupings.

Dependent on the type of group arrangements the school may still be governed at a local level. The amount of governance (decision making) kept at a local level and the degree of individual autonomy for the school will vary dependent on the nature of the grouped arrangement.

For example, a Multi Academy Trust decides the amount of individual autonomy given to each school in the group, whereas in an Umbrella Trust each school is an individual legal entity and will retain its own governance.

Will it make any difference to my child's education which of these models he/she attends?

No. All academies are there to improve the quality of your child's education. However, with any application for admission you are encouraged to look at information on your preferred school. If necessary speak to the Headteacher and arrange a visit.

Are there any rules relating to admissions that academies and maintained schools have to follow?

Yes. Academies have to follow the law for school admissions, special educational needs and exclusions as if they were a maintained school. Academies cannot select pupils on the basis of ability.

If there are extended services provided by an academy or on the same site, for example a Childrens Centre, will these be affected by the change?

When a school becomes an academy the council has to take a detailed look on how extended services are provided. These services will continue to be available for parents, pupils and the wider community but we need to ensure that they operate on the correct legal basis. Parents should be assured that academy status is not about removing important extended services that may be offered in your locality.

How do I find out more about academies?

There are several ways you may find out about academies. If your local school is considering conversion then you should expect to be consulted if you have a child at the school.

You can find out more information from the [Department for Education](#).