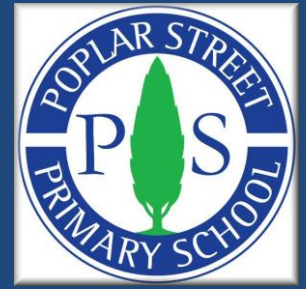


POPLAR STREET PRIMARY SCHOOL ACADEMY CONSULTATION



FREQUENTLY ASKED
QUESTIONS

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 directly from central government. Previously academies have tended to replace schools which have poor results or otherwise needed to improve. However, under the Academies Act 2010, all schools are able to become academies. There is now a drive from the Department for Education for Outstanding schools to lead Multi-Academy Trusts.

What is a Multi-Academy Trust?

A Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) is a group of academy schools overseen by an educational charity.. The charity trust board would be made up from governors from the schools in our partnership and other trustees specifically recruited for their skills. Rather than being funded by and accountable to the local authority, a MAT is directly funded by and accountable to the Department for Education. Academies are still part of the community and serve children and families in a particular area and retain the same responsibilities as any maintained school as part of the learning community. Outstanding MATs also help to support other schools. The Trust is accountable for all of the schools that are a part of it and, through Schemes of Delegation, decide which powers are retained by the Trust and which are delegated to individual schools.

Why are we considering joining a Multi-Academy Trust?

The Carillion Academies Trust is a successful group of local schools that has led to improved results for children, financial efficiencies and exceptional professional development of staff. We want to secure this partnership and protect our school going forward. The direction of Department for Education policy is for all schools to become academies and become part of a multi-academy trust. As an academy we would have greater control of our school budget and greater autonomy over our curriculum. Over the next few years there is going to be a reduction in school budgets and we need to continue to be as financially healthy as possible. By joining in a MAT we can secure greater opportunities for financial savings. As we have learned through our other school partnerships, collaborative working with other schools can provide an improved educational experience for our own students through various areas including teaching and learning, an enhanced and engaging curriculum, staff development and progression opportunities, finance and human resources, legal services, school improvement structures and governance arrangements.

Would the admissions arrangements change?

A community school's admissions arrangements are set by the Local Authority and the LA also decides which pupils should be offered places at our school. We are committed to these principles and the current admission arrangements would remain in place. If for some reason the academy wanted to change its admissions arrangements in the future, consultation would be required and would still comply with the Admissions Code.

Will our school change?

We want to continue to be great schools where every child is valued. We therefore do not intend to change except in ways we think will improve the schools even more. For children, it is unlikely that they would see much, if any, change in their day-to-day school lives. Academies have more freedom than other state schools over their finances, curriculum, length of terms and school days. However, we do not intend to take any such steps at this stage and would engage with parents/carers, staff and students if we did ever intend to make such changes in the future.

Do academies have to follow the National Curriculum?

Academies do not have to follow the National Curriculum so this would allow us to change and adapt our curriculum to better meet the needs of our pupils. However, over the past few years we have adapted the National Curriculum to follow our values and approach. We already have a rich and creative curriculum framework as recognised by OFSTED.

Would academy status affect the provision for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)?

No, SEND services would stay exactly the same as they are currently.

What would the changes mean for staff?

Staff would not notice significant changes in their everyday working lives. Terms and conditions for existing staff would remain the same and pensions would transfer (including pension contributions). Their contracts would TUPE across from Tameside MBC to the Trust. The change will come when one day their employer is the Tameside MBC and the next day their employer is the Trust. Professional development would further expand and there would be a greater range of opportunities for advancement.

Who makes the final decision on whether each school converts to an academy?

The Board of Governors.

Has the Department for Education or the Local Authority put pressure on the schools to convert? Absolutely not. This is an initiative taken by the Governing Body of each school after careful consideration.

Would other schools join the CAT and who would make the decision on if additional schools join?

Any decision on additional schools joining the Trust would be made by the Board of Trustees. We would expect other schools to join as time goes on and any school that joins us would be expected to abide by our vision & ethos and governance structure and to fully contribute to and learn from the other schools.

Would the schools have to change their names?

No, schools would retain their names and uniform policies.

What would the group of schools (the Trust) be called?

The Trust would be called The Carillion Academies Trust. Each School would be still called a primary school. The trust vision would build on our core ethos and values - we would maintain and strengthen our focus on creativity, high expectations and inclusion.

If the schools are no longer part of the local authority, then who are they accountable to?

The Trust would be accountable directly to the Department for Education and our accounts audited by the DfE's Education Funding Agency and external auditors, and we would be overseen by our Regional Schools Commissioner Vicky Beer CBE, as well as continue to be subject to OFSTED inspections.

Is Poplar Street the only primary school looking to academise in Tameside?

No. A number of schools have already converted or are currently undergoing the same consideration process we are. It is up to the governing bodies of those schools to decide. Schools are beginning to recognise the potential benefits of becoming an academy.

Who runs a MAT?

The Board of Directors runs the MAT. The current executive head teacher, Karen Burns and head teacher/s within the MAT will contribute to the leadership of the whole group under the leadership of the Board of Directors. The MAT structure will be published later in the consultation process. Each school would continue to have its own Local Governing Body (LGB). Above the Local Governing Bodies would be The Trust, essentially functioning as one board of governors overseeing the local boards. They would be the main decision-making group and accountable for all schools within the Trust. Neither governors or trustees receive any financial remuneration for their duties as these roles are voluntary as part of the charitable status

I've seen news reports about failing schools being forced to be taken over as academies. What does this have to do with The Poplar Street?

A school that is failing, or 'coasting', can be taken over by a sponsor and turned into an academy with the aim of the sponsor driving improvement in the school. But what does not make for dramatic news is that good and outstanding schools are able to join a Multi-Academy Trust. We want to make this move because we are a good school and we want to maintain what has made us that way. By joining a Trust, we would be able to keep everything great about our school and continue to make improvements that work for our school. Like local authority schools, academies can also perform poorly. But in any type of school, the success depends on the leadership & management in charge.

What process have the governors gone through in deciding to begin this process and will we definitely become an academy?

This is not a decision we have come to quickly; this is the result of the evolution of everything we have been through on our journey, alongside a vast amount of research and training undertaken by governors and meetings with other Trusts to move forward with the process of joining a MAT. At the end of the consultation period, the school's board of governors will discuss the consultation responses and we will update you on the outcome.

Can schools withdraw from the conversion process?

Schools are able to withdraw right up to the point that they sign the Funding Agreement. Once this is signed there is a legally binding agreement between the Secretary of State and the academy and the termination process would require a long notice period.

What is the timescale for conversion?

The entire process from start to finish generally takes 3-5 months, with conversions being made official on the 1st date of a given month. For us, this is likely to be 1st January. It would be a smooth transition in which children, staff and parents are unlikely to perceive any change, and no disruption to the normal running of the school. If we convert, the date would be determined with the Department for Education and we would let you know when it is confirmed.

If you have any further questions, please address them to the Chair of Governors:
Mrs C McBride, c/o Poplar Street Primary School, Ravenwood Drive, Audenshaw. M34 5EF.
Alternatively, please email school at admin@poplarstreet.tameside.sch.uk, indicating 'Academy' in the subject field.