

Sancta Familia Catholic Academy Trust

Academy Conversion Consultation

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. What is an academy? Academy schools are state funded schools in England that are directly funded by central government (specifically, the Department for Education) and independent of direct funding and control by the Local Authority.

Further information on what academies are and how they operate can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/types-of-school/academies>

Further information on the Archdiocese of Southwark's approach to academies is available here: <https://www.rcaoseducation.org.uk/academisation/>

2. Why are we becoming an academy now? The Government wants all schools to become academies, although the most recent White Paper that outlined the ambition for all schools to join strong Trusts by 2030 was withdrawn. Many schools locally and nationally are still choosing to become academies, joining Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs). The strategic direction of our Archdiocese is for its schools to form and/or join local Catholic Academy Trusts, established to meet the needs of its member schools. Our school has worked closely with 14 other, like-minded Catholic schools across Merton, Sutton and Croydon for a number of years and we have jointly developed proposals to establish a Catholic Academy Trust called Sancta Familia Catholic Academy Trust.

3. Are academies schools that are performing badly and need support? There are two routes to becoming an academy, depending on the status of the converting school. Schools that are in need of additional support are called 'sponsored' academies. Schools that are performing well and are educationally and financially secure have the freedom to choose when and how they convert – they are called 'converter' academies.

Our school is a high-performing and stable school and therefore we are choosing to become a 'converter' academy.

4. Have other MATs been considered by the Governing Body? No, our school is a Catholic school and must join a Catholic Academy Trust to protect and preserve its unique character and the Catholic education we provide. We have an opportunity to contribute to the establishment of a new Catholic Academy Trust where we can influence how this will be formed to suit the needs of our own school.

5. Are any other schools in our local area academies? Yes, there are a number of academies in our area. Some are part of large national MATs, some are part of the Church of England Diocesan MAT, and some are part of smaller local Trusts.

6. What is the track-record of academies in comparison to LA maintained schools? Like all schools, regardless of category, the performance nationally is variable and very much depends on the support provided by the MAT to help the school succeed as an academy. This is why our school are proposing to join a local Catholic Academy Trust, where we are heavily involved in its development and what it will offer in terms of support for our school.

7. Will a move to academy status mean a new name for the school? No. The school will continue to be called Regina Coeli Catholic Primary School. The other schools proposing to join Sancta Familia Catholic Academy Trust have also chosen to retain their current name.

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8. Will a proposed new academy have a new uniform? No. Parents will not need to buy a new uniform.

9. Will a proposed new academy still be open to the community? Yes. There will be no change to the current provision and use of the school by different groups to hold events.

10. What will be the impact on our children with special needs? There will be no change to the level of support provided. Our school will continue to recognise that every pupil is different and has the right to be included as a valued, respected and equal member of the school community. The local authority retains responsibility for statutory duties such as SEND provision and safeguarding.

11. Will the school hours be any different as an academy? Although it is highly unlikely that the school day will be changed, it is the responsibility of the Trust Board to decide this as they have the power to do so. This decision is usually delegated to the local governing body of an academy, so there is no real change from our authority in this regard. As is the case now, parents would be consulted prior to any change in school hours, although no change is envisaged.

12. Will students' education be disrupted by a transition to academy status? No. When an academy is approved to go ahead, it will do so with minimal disruption to the staff and students. Most of the changes will take place behind the scenes with support from a project manager, who has gone through this process before with many other schools.

13. If we move to being an academy will this change what is taught? The Trust will delegate curriculum policy to each academy. As an academy, there are greater freedoms within the curriculum but our school's curriculum is unlikely to change because of our move to academy status. The school is still inspected under the same Ofsted framework and CSI framework. Our pupils will still be required to sit SATS.

14. If very little changes for pupils/students when the school becomes an academy, why do it? Whilst on a day-to-day basis the pupils/students, staff and parents/carers will not notice a difference, there are opportunities that working more closely with our partner schools brings. It is correct to say that our school can work in partnership with other schools now as a maintained school, however the nature of the relationship amongst the schools joining Sancta Familia Catholic Academy Trust will be different. Our school will be part of a larger family that is able to share resources, knowledge, training, costs and capacity to benefit pupils across LA boundaries under a single legal entity. The school is not becoming an academy because it is dissatisfied with the support provided by our Local Authority and we are likely to continue to purchase some support from the Local Authority as we do now. There is an opportunity to join our partner Catholic schools in Sancta Familia where we can provide support and receive support from fellow high-performing Catholic schools, balanced with appropriate external scrutiny to ensure that we continue to perform well.

15. How is an academy funded? In maintained schools, revenue funding goes directly to the Local Authority. The Local Authority (LA) takes a proportion of the money from the school budget to provide essential services to the school and the rest is delegated under the Local Management of Schools. Schools can, and do, buy additional services from the LA and other providers. As a result schools currently depend upon the local authority for many services

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such as school improvement, HR, finance support, etc.

Academies will receive the same level of per-pupil funding as maintained schools, plus funding to meet additional responsibilities that are no longer provided for them by the Local Authority (LA). With a MAT, the money that would have been provided to the LA to run the school is provided directly to the MAT. The Trust does retain some of the budget in order to provide services to the academy.

16. Does this improve on current funding arrangements? No, converting to an academy will not be to our advantage financially. Our school will be required to pay a 'top-slice' to the Academy Trust to cover the costs of a small central team and the support services provided. An analysis is currently being completed on how this will affect the school budget as some of the services we pay the Local Authority to provide will be provided by the Academy Trust as part of the top slice. Funding is available to cover the costs of the conversion process itself. In addition, the Academy Trust is able to submit bids for capacity funding from the Department for Education.

17. What are the Terms and Conditions for staff? On conversion to academy status teachers and staff employed by the school will transfer with the same terms and conditions, via a formal TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment) process. In addition, conversion will not affect any union memberships.

18. Who will employ teachers and staff following conversion? At present, as a Voluntary Aided school, staff are employed by the Governing Body of the school. Following conversion, staff will be employed by Sancta Familia Catholic Academy Trust.

19. Will school staff have to re-apply for their jobs when the school becomes an academy? No. Staff will transfer in their current role, with their current contract and the terms and conditions they have now. These terms and conditions are protected by the TUPE regulations.