

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 funded directly by the Government rather than via the Local Authority which enables academies to choose how they spend their 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.

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.

Will Upper Arley lose its Christian Character and ethos?

No. Any school with a religious character wanting to convert to an academy must keep its status the same. It has to ask the Diocese permission to convert to an academy. Upper Arley is very proud of its Christian distinctiveness and will continue to celebrate the way it contributes to the whole child.

What are the advantages for Upper Arley moving to an academy?

- Freedom to develop further a curriculum that meets the needs of all our students.
- Flexibility of direct funding to fulfil the specific requirements of our school.
- Direct and increased funding to preserve and develop the best of what we do as a school in challenging economic times.
- Upper Arley believe that converting to academy status will provide the best route for us to build on our many strengths and become an even better school. Above all, we believe it may benefit our students and our future students, as well as staff and the wider community. We would keep all the features of the school that are valued so highly by our students, parents and staff but use the additional freedoms academy status brings to enhance our provision for all.
- Gaining academy status means we would be funded directly from government and have more freedom to spend our money as we choose. We would also become owners of our land and buildings. Other freedoms, such as the ability to introduce some flexibility to staff pay and conditions would help us recruit and retain the very best people.

Are there disadvantages?

- Perception that 'old-style' academies were created to replace underperforming schools.
- Uncertainty about future government policy.
- Autonomy brings associated responsibility in areas such as asset management.
- Certain teaching unions and support staff unions are unhappy with schools leaving Local Authority Control.

Is the school required to cover the full cost to convert to an academy?

No. Total costs will vary from schools to school but the DfE will pay a flat-rate grant of £25,000 to the school's bank account. This may not cover the whole costs involved, but we hope that by expecting schools to contribute the remaining costs they will keep them to a minimum. To reduce potential legal costs the Department has produced model legal documentation which is available to download from their website.

Do academies have greater freedom over admissions?

The school would continue with the current procedures. Academies have to comply with the Schools Admissions Code and this does not, for instance, permit selection. Schools converting to academy status will retain the admission criteria they currently use and we will still follow the procedures at our school.

Are academies free from Ofsted inspection?

No. Academies are subject to the same inspection regulations as all maintained schools

Will there be any staff changes?

No. All staff at Upper Arley will remain at the school. Mrs Langfield and the Governing Body will remain responsible for the appointment of school staff.

Who would take responsibility for teachers and support staff pensions?

There will be no change to the pension entitlements of staff. Upper Arley C of E Primary School is registered with the Teachers' Pensions and the Local Government pension scheme. With academy status, the school would register in exactly the same way.

Upper Arley and The Black Pear Trust recognise that attracting and retaining good quality staff is essential to the well-being of the school and would always seek to provide a caring environment where the welfare of staff and a good work-life balance are given the utmost importance. We believe many strides forward have been made in recent years with issues such as tasks teachers are expected to undertake and would expect to continue to work in this spirit, allowing teachers to focus on their work in the classroom.

Upper Arley and The Black Pear Trust will continue to recognise professional associations and trades unions, working with them in spirit of collaboration and mutual interest.

Upper Arley and The Black Pear Trust will continue to fully consult with staff and professional associations on any matter concerning pay and conditions, working practices or staff welfare.

Upper Arley and The Black Pear Trust will continue to follow teachers' national pay and conditions, unless genuine improvements can be made. TUPE [Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment)] regulations would be fully respected and protect existing rights.

Should teachers' national pay and conditions cease to exist we would aim to offer at least better than average pay and conditions than can be found elsewhere.

Upper Arley and The Black Pear Trust would operate a fair and transparent system for evaluating pay for support staff, taking independent advice as required. This would also apply to teachers if national pay and conditions cease to exist in the future.

Can the school have freedom to set its own curriculum?

The Black Pear Trust follow the National Curriculum and believe it is imperative that all schools within the Trust provide a balanced and broad curriculum which meets the needs of the pupils within each school. The Trust has developed a comprehensive curriculum package to support teachers to deliver high quality sequences of learning. Upper Arley will have full access to the Trust curriculum documents as well as the opportunity to collaborate and plan with teachers from all Trust schools.

What would happen to special educational needs (SEN) support?

A small number of children at the school require an 'Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP)'. For students with an Educational Health Care Plan' the funding does not change and will continue to be funded by the Local Authority, who currently retain the responsibility for the statutory provision. Furthermore, the school will continue to be able to apply for additional funding from the Local Authority for children on the SEND register who do not have an 'EHCP'. This is often referred to as Higher Needs funding. All levels of funding remain the same as maintained schools. With academy status, this funding simply comes directly to the school.

Can you provide an overview of the Trust SEND offer?

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

At The Black Pear Trust, all pupils are equally valued by having access to a broad and balanced curriculum which is matched to meet individual needs and abilities.

We have effective management systems and procedures for SEND, taking into account the current Code of Practice (2014). The Trust has an Inclusion Lead and a specialist Leader of Education for SEND who are available to support schools and families within the Trust.

All stakeholders communicate regularly, this includes teachers, teaching assistants, children with SEND, parents, specialist support and outside agencies. We acknowledge and draw on parents' knowledge and expertise in relation to their own child to inform their support. Children are encouraged to take an active role in their review cycle to ensure that their voice is heard. We are committed to developing the knowledge and skills of all staff to manage the range of needs in the school, and to ensure that all support is of high quality. We have an effective review cycle that allows us to monitor, review and plan for next steps of development.

If a learner is identified as having SEND, we will provide support that is 'additional to', or 'different from' the matched approaches and learning arrangements normally provided. This support is set out in the Local Authority document 'Ordinarily Available'.

When providing support that is 'additional to' or 'different from' we follow the 'Graduated Approach' for supporting children with SEND. Through the 'assess, plan, do review' cycle we ensure we are identifying the best way of ensuring we meet the needs of all of our learners.

This additional support, 'intervention' will be tailored to meet the child's needs and will target the area of difficulty. This support may be provided in class or in another area of the school on a 1:1 basis or as part of a small group of learners with similar needs. These 'interventions' may be run by a teacher or a trained teaching assistant. The support provided, and its impact in class, will be monitored and shared with the child and with their parents or carers.

If throughout this process it is determined that a child has a Special Education Need (in consultation with parents), children will be placed on the schools SEND register and will receive SEN support. If a child continues to require significant individualised support then an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) may be requested. There are two levels of SEND:

- SEN support
- Educational Health and Care Plan (EHCP)

For further information regarding the SEND offer provided by Trust schools please follow the link below:

[SEND Offer | Carnforth School](#)

Who Are The Black Pear Trust?

The Black Pear is a small trust currently consisting of three Worcestershire primary schools.

- Carnforth School, Worcester
- Hollymount School, Worcester
- St George's C of E School, Kidderminster

Our vision

The Trust has agreed a vision which can best be summarised by our motto:

Growing Excellent Learning Communities Together

We want the very best of futures for all our pupils, we want them to find out about, be inspired by and enjoy the world they live in. We want them to have the confidence to recognise and grasp opportunities that they are given and to have high expectations of themselves and others.

We want our staff to feel valued, to be outward looking and have the skills that enable them to contribute and have an impact on the success of the Trust Schools.

Our aims

Our vision is supported through our aims, which are:

- To cultivate and maintain high standards for all
- To help all schools succeed
- To invest in the development of our excellent staff
- To encourage positive relationships between all Trust schools and their communities
- To ensure financial stability
- To provide the best facilities, ensuring schools have excellent facilities and a safe environment

Our core values

As a Trust we have 4 core values:

- Pride
- Excellence
- Achievement
- Respect

which for our children translate to

- Proud to be me
- Enjoy Learning
- Achieve Success
- Respect for the World

These are embedded throughout the curriculum and form the foundation of the education of our pupils. Through these values, our aim is to develop well-rounded individuals who will have the skills and aptitude to become successful members of British society and the world-wide community.

Will the school day or school holidays change?

The Black Pear Trust follows the same school holiday dates as Worcestershire County Council. INSET days for a new academic year are shared with parents/carers in the summer term prior to the new academic year.

Will the Trust continue to support the PTA and the school's wider community links?

Yes, the Trust will fully support the school's PTA and community links. The Trust believes that each of the schools within the Trust should play an active role within their local community. We would work with Mrs Langfield and the school to support this work.

Will there be a new school uniform?

All Trust schools have chosen to change their school uniform post conversion, please follow the link below for an example of St George's C of E School:

[Uniform | St George's C of E Primary School \(stgprimary.org\)](http://stgprimary.org)

This will be an area the Trust would welcome discussion on with Mrs Langfield, school governors, parents and children once the school is part of the Trust.