



Topcliffe Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School Academy Conversion Consultation

1. What is an academy?

Academies are independent, non-fee paying schools.

When a school converts to an academy, it ceases to be maintained by the local authority and will be run by an academy trust. Instead, the academy trust will receive the funding for the academy directly from the Department for Education (DfE).

Like maintained schools, academies are inspected by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and (if a Church of England academy) under the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) framework.

Academies follow broadly the same rules as maintained schools in relation to admissions, exclusions and special educational needs.

2. What is a multi-academy trust?

An academy trust is responsible for running an academy or multiple academies. An academy trust that runs multiple academies is called a multi-academy trust (**MAT**). A MAT is a charitable company limited by guarantee with members and directors/trustees who are responsible for the operation of the MAT and its academies.

Members are similar to shareholders but they act on an unpaid voluntary basis. They have certain oversight powers, for example in relation to amending the MAT's constitutional documents and appointing and removing trustees.

Directors/trustees are entrusted with directing the MAT's operations and are responsible for making key strategic decisions. They are both company directors and charity trustees. They are responsible for running the MAT and the academies it is responsible for. The three core strategic functions for an MAT board of directors/trustees are:

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- Holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the performance management of staff; and
- Overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent.

Whilst the board of directors/trustees of a MAT is responsible for overseeing all the academies within the MAT, in general individual academies will also have a local governing committee with a specific remit both to advise the board of directors/trustees in respect of their academy and to take on responsibility for decision making and oversight of specific areas relating to their academy.

The day-to-day running of the school remains with the headteacher, with oversight from the Chief Executive of the MAT.

The MAT is answerable to the Secretary of State/DfE, the Education Funding Agency (**EFA**) and the relevant Regional School Commissioner, each of whom have certain responsibilities for taking action in the event that an academy/MAT is underperforming and/or not complying with their academy arrangements. MATs also need to comply with additional financial and other reporting to satisfy the requirements of education, company and charity law (this burden will be managed by the MAT centrally and not by individual schools). Additionally, MATs are responsible, in relation to Church of England academies, to the relevant Diocesan Board of Education.

3. Who would we be we joining?

We have been invited to join Elevate Multi Academy Trust (working title), a MAT which is in the process of being set up. Elevate's governance and leadership structure will reflect its collaborative arrangement between Church and non-Church academies. Elevate is working with the York Diocesan Board of Education (**YDBE**) to ensure that the Church of England foundation of any Church of England academy seeking to join the MAT would be protected in such arrangements.

It is anticipated that, by the time of Topcliffe's conversion, the MAT will include three local schools: Meadowside Primary, Aspin Park Primary and Knayton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School. All three of these schools are either Outstanding or Good in OFSTED terms and all three achieve high attainment and progress for children in school. Despite the recent changes to assessment, all three schools have attainment and progress which exceeds both local and national averages.

As the education system faces inevitable significant change, many schools local to us will also be starting to have discussions about academisation. Nigel Ashley is a highly respected member of the education community - at a local and national level - and in the coming months many local schools will likely see our MAT as an attractive option. Together will be in a strong position to identify those schools which will best suit us and enhance our offering.

4. Why become an academy within Elevate Multi Academy Trust?

'Growing Stronger Together'

It is an exciting opportunity for Topcliffe to be able to join this MAT and other high achieving local schools in order to share outstanding practice and share expertise.

We are all part of the North Star Teaching Schools Alliance, based at Meadowside, which has over seventy schools involved in it. This allows for close collaboration and provides training and development for staff.

Both Aspin and Meadowside are both National Support Schools, which allows staff to work with other schools to develop their capacity to provide a good education for their pupils. Both schools' Head Teachers are National Leaders of Education and several other teachers are Specialist Leaders of Education, in addition to staff from Knayton. All schools employ outstanding middle and senior leaders who have the skills to support individuals or teams in similar positions in other schools.

All schools have innovative and carefully planned curriculums, appropriate to their own schools. As academies we would be free to develop our curriculum without being tied to the National

Curriculum. Schools would continue to teach everything expected within the National Curriculum, and pupils would be tested in line with maintained schools (e.g. SATs at Y2 and Y6). As high-performing schools we are well placed to meet the needs of children in the 21st Century.

Changing our school's status from local authority maintained schools to an academy would give us many of the freedoms we deserve as a mature and successful organisation. At the heart of Elevate's ethos is the desire to work in collaboration with each other and other schools, and each school will still be involved in this, whilst each keeping its own distinctive ethos.

We believe strongly that all children have the right to a high-quality, stimulating education, and it is our moral duty to provide this, ensuring that under the new more stringent assessment regime that now exists, that children 'keep up' in their education, and that children, parents and the school all have their own role to play.

Through working together in a MAT, we can use our money wisely to put more money into teaching and learning. Our key purpose is to provide education for primary-aged children, and Elevate will be a Primary MAT. The MAT would have a highly-skilled workforce, and all schools are experienced in recognising that its staff has to have a stimulating and supportive workplace as much as the children do.

Spending & services

The money that currently comes to the school from the local authority would (in the main) come to the MAT directly from the DfE, not via the local authority. The MAT should also receive additional funding in respect of each academy to compensate for the fact that some of the services that the local authority historically provided are being provided/procured by the MAT on behalf of its academies. The MAT will therefore be able to make its own decisions, guided by its academies, about how money is spent and what services it buys/provides to enable it to meet the needs of the children, rather than being provided with services, many of which the schools do not require.

5. How will staff be affected?

Staff contracts will automatically be transferred across to the MAT on conversion under the Transfer of Undertaking (Protection of Employment) Regulations (TUPE). Staff will therefore retain the same terms and conditions of employment. There may be opportunities for staff to work across multiple schools in the MAT, but this is something we would discuss and agree with members of staff where this is something they want to explore. Staff consultation will be carried out as part of the wider consultation process.

6. What would the composition and role of the Local Governing Committee be?

The local governing committee for Topcliffe would have a mix of local governors including parent local governors, the headteacher, other staff local governors, foundation local governors and co-opted governors.

Foundation local governors, like foundation governors on the current governing body, would have a special role and responsibility for ensuring that the Church of England character of the academy was preserved and developed. These local governors would also ensure that the academy was conducted in accordance with the school's trust deed relating to its land. Foundation local governors would make up 25% of the local governing committee and would be appointed by the YDBE following consultation with the local Parochial Church Council. The local governing committee would be vital

in ensuring that our school's Christian values are still celebrated and the fantastic links that we currently enjoy continue to grow and develop.

Topcliffe's local governing committee would advise the board of directors/trustees in respect of the academy and take on responsibility for decision making and oversight of specific areas relating to the academy. As Topcliffe is a strong school, it is anticipated that the Local Governing Committee will have a significant number of matters delegated to it, such that in many areas it would operate in much the same way as Topcliffe's governing body does at present.

7. How would the Church of England foundation of Topcliffe be protected in the proposed arrangements?

Like the school, the academy would be designated with a Church of England religious character and the YDBE would remain the relevant religious authority. We would work closely with the YDBE to ensure that the Church of England foundation of Topcliffe would be preserved and developed in the new structure. Some of the key ways this would be secured are:

- **Securing an important role for Foundation local governors on the local governing body of the academy.** Please see above. Foundation local governors would be supported by Foundation members and trustees in the wider MAT governance arrangements.
- **Careful consideration of leadership appointments:** When the headteacher of a Church of England school is appointed, the governing body considers matters such as the individual's ability and capacity to preserve and develop the religious character of the school. In making future appointments, the same kind of questions would be asked to ensure that any new headteacher is the right person to lead the academy, and advice from the YDBE would be sought in connection with the appointment process. The same would apply to any Chief Executive/Executive Principal (or similar) who might be appointed to oversee the work of the academy.
- **Ensuring that the school converts to an academy on an "as is" basis:** When a Voluntary Controlled (VC) school converts to an academy, it ceases to have its VC status. This is because the status can only apply to a school maintained by the local authority. However, the legal arrangements put in place with the DfE seek to ensure that the protections that apply in the VC school context apply in much the same way to the school after it becomes an academy. For example, the legal framework would require that:
 - **Religious education** continues to be taught **as previously**.
 - The **daily act of Collective Worship** continues to be provided **in accordance with the trust deed/Anglican tradition**.
 - The special provisions **relating to the appointment of staff** at a VC school continue to apply in relation to academy staff.
 - The academy continues to be **inspected** in the same manner under the SIAMS framework. (SIAMS stands for Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools and provides a process for evaluating the extent to which church schools and academies are distinctively and recognisably Christian institutions.)
 - **School land** (except the playing fields) will be **held on trust by Church site trustees**.
 - In considering any changes to the **admissions** arrangements, the MAT would also need to have regard to the YDBE's guidance and advice.

The YDBE and the site trustees' consent would be required prior to any conversion taking place.

8. What would be the impact on our community and partnerships?

Despite being part of Elevate, all the schools would remain very much at the heart of their own communities, and the unique nature of each school will remain. We will continue with our existing partnerships, working with the local authority and others as appropriate.

9. Would there be a change to admissions?

There would be no changes to current admissions arrangements on conversion, save that the academy trust would become the admissions authority with responsibility for setting admissions arrangements. (The admissions policy would be updated to reflect this.) We would continue to be part of the local authority's Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme. Any future changes proposed to the admissions arrangements would need to be made in accordance with the statutory admissions code and related legislation and would be the subject of consultation. In considering any changes to the admissions arrangements, we would also need to have regard to the YDBE's guidance and advice.

10. What would stay the same?

From the children's point of view, their school day won't change.

Schools joining this MAT will retain their own distinctive characters and identities - including their own uniforms, logos and websites. Most importantly Topcliffe will keep its own ethos, vision and values, including its Christian values.

The school name will have to change slightly, to Topcliffe CofE Academy.

Have Your Say

We really want to hear what pupils, parents, staff, governors and the community think about the proposed conversion to an Academy. Consultation events are planned at the school on the following dates for parents and staff;

Tuesday 9 th May 2017	3.30 - 5.00 pm	Staff consultation
Wednesday 10 th May 2017	2.30 - 3.00 pm	Parents consultation
Wednesday 10 th May 2017	5.30 - 8.30 pm	Informal drop-in for our parents, local community and staff

However, if you are a member of the wider educational or local community, there is the opportunity to give us your views online through using this link: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/P9BBJ53>
Parents and staff can also use this link.

The final date for letting us know your views is: Friday 26th May 2017.



Topcliffe CofE Primary School Consultation Response Form

<p>Are you a parent or carer at Topcliffe CofE Primary School? <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Are you a member of staff at Topcliffe CofE Primary School? <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Are you a local resident near Topcliffe CofE Primary School? <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Other? <input type="checkbox"/> Please specify:</p>
<p>Do you agree that the school should become an Academy and enter into a funding agreement with the Secretary of State*?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p><i>* The funding agreement is the contract every converting school must sign with the Secretary of State for Education. It's the formal consent to allow the school to convert and it provides the operating framework for the school, including the commitment to ongoing funding. We are therefore seeking your feedback on whether you support the conversion, and if so, for you to respond accordingly above.</i></p>
<p>Additional comments - please tell us how you think the Academy could be even better for you and the community.</p>

Thank you.

Please return by Friday 26th May 2017.