



## Alsager Highfields Sponsored Academy Conversion – FAQs for Parents / Carers

### 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.

### Who are / What is Alsager Multi Academy Trust (AMAT)?

AMAT was established in September 2013 when Alsager School converted to Academy Status. AMAT currently consists of Alsager School and Weston Village Primary School. It is a registered company, limited by guarantee, and has exempt charity status. The company number is 8597784. As with all Multi Academy Trusts, there are Members or owners of the company and a Board of Trustees. Richard Middlebrook is the Accounting Officer and Executive Headteacher for AMAT. For more details visit [www.alsagerschool.org](http://www.alsagerschool.org) (About Us/School Governance/AMAT Governance).

### Will Alsager Highfields Community Primary School definitely become an Academy?

The short answer is 'yes'. Under current government legislation, any school that is graded as 'Inadequate' by Ofsted becomes subject to a 'Directed Academy Order'. This means that the school is directed to join a multi academy trust by the Department for Education, chosen by the Regional Schools Commissioner (who is acting on behalf of the Department for Education). Alsager Multi Academy Trust (AMAT) has been chosen as the preferred sponsor and following the completion of a full due diligence process, Alsager Highfields will convert to an academy and re-open as part of AMAT. In the highly unlikely event that the due diligence raises serious concerns, which cannot be addressed to the satisfaction of the Board of Trustees for AMAT, then another multi academy trust will be sought. However, whatever happens, Alsager Highfields will definitely become an academy in the near future.

### How long will it take?

The current timeframe is that we are working towards a conversion and re-opening date of 1/9/20. The due diligence process has already started and there is much to do. The current national situation with school closures makes this more difficult but we will do all we can to meet this date.

### Can Alsager Highfields convert without the support of the staff, governing body and parents / carers?

The fact that the school is subject to a 'Directed Academy Order' means the answer to this question is 'yes'. However, AMAT want to work with the staff, governors, pupils and parents / carers as much as possible, rather than it being imposed upon the school. The fact that AMAT is a local trust, with existing strong partnerships with Alsager Highfields and with local knowledge, means that this will be much easier to do. The fact that Alsager Highfields is currently a Foundation School and part of Alsager Community Trust (ACT), along with Alsager School, means that the trustees of ACT will also be informed and included in this conversion process.

### What does it mean to be a Sponsored Academy?

As with all academies, a Board of Trustees has the final responsibility for any multi academy trust. The Trustees can determine how much authority should be delegated to the school and to the local governing body of that school. Often, in the case of sponsored academies, the scheme of delegation is such that the Trustees retain more control of the school. Once the school is performing effectively again, then the scheme of delegation would change and the Trustees are less involved.

**Will the admissions arrangements change for Alsager Highfields?**

As a Foundation School, Alsager Highfields already deals with its own admissions arrangements. As an Academy, it would still deal with its own admission arrangements and would still be bound by the Schools Admissions Code and Admissions Appeals Code. This means there will be no change in the way in which the admission arrangements are set when Alsager Highfields becomes an Academy.

All Academies continue to be within the co-ordinated admissions of the Local Authority i.e. the process for allocating school places to children. This means that parents / carers only need to complete one application form. The Local Authority still has the overall responsibility for ensuring that there are sufficient places to meet demand locally.

If an Academy wants to change its admissions arrangements consultation is required.

**What will happen to Special Educational Needs (SEN) Support?**

The expectations and role of all educational providers is the same, regardless of legal status and so in that respect academy conversion will make no difference to SEND support.

**Will Alsager Highfields change its name or uniform?**

This is not a requirement of the conversion and we are not planning to do this. We are proposing the name Alsager Highfields Community Primary School remains and the uniform continues as now.

**Will Alsager Highfields have to cover the cost to convert to an academy?**

No. The DfE have awarded a grant, which will cover this.

**What process of financial audit are required of Academies and to whom will the auditors be responsible?**

An external independent auditor, appointed by the academy, will conduct the main audit. The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) monitor all academy finances and can audit the academy if it wishes. All academies must publish their annual accounts through Companies House. In addition, internal audits of the trusts accounts take place throughout the year.

**Are Academies free from Ofsted inspection?**

No, we will continue to be subject to routine school inspection.

**Are Academies exempt from the freedom of information act?**

No. The Academies Bill has brought academies into line with other public institutions.

***If you have any further questions or concerns, please send them to the following e-mail address and they will be answered ASAP [Clerk@AlsagerMAT.org](mailto:Clerk@AlsagerMAT.org)***