



## **WRIGHT ROBINSON COLLEGE- ACADEMY CONVERSION FAQs**

### **GENERAL QUESTIONS**

#### **What is an academy?**

An academy is an all-ability school that is directly funded by central government and independent of direct control by local government. Academies are inspected by Ofsted. Academies are self-governing.

#### **What will be the name of the Trust?**

The Flagship Learning Trust.

#### **Will the school need to change its name?**

There are no plans to change the name of Wright Robinson College.

#### **Will there be a new uniform?**

There are no plans for a change to the uniform at Wright Robinson College.

#### **Can the academy work with the council and other schools?**

Yes. The academy may buy back services from the local authority. The academy can work with any schools it wishes if this makes a difference to the education of the children.

#### **Why do we want to become an Academy?**

We are one of a very few Outstanding Maintained Schools in the inner City with the proven leadership skills and developmental skills to facilitate sustained school improvement. We have a proven model for rapid improvement in learning outcomes that are sustainable in the long term. We believe that we can help other schools to deliver good and outstanding learning outcomes and develop young people who can shape their lives to make a positive contribution to employment and wider society.

As the educational landscape changes and the role of Local Authorities becomes diminished, it is imperative that outstanding schools take the initiative and develop a self-sustaining system for school improvement.

#### **Rationale & Benefits**

The Governing Body of Wright Robinson College will establish the Flagship Learning Trust (FLT). The aim of the FLT will be to improve the academic performance and physical, social and emotional wellbeing of the young people attending the Trust schools.

The trust will work to integrate health, wellbeing and employability into an academically challenging secondary curriculum thus improving outcomes for students. A sustainable, replicable model will be developed with a view to bringing additional schools into the Trust and there will be a moral purpose to support underperforming schools. Social mobility will be a key element of the Trust's ethos and purpose.

## Key areas when converting to academy status:

- **Sharing of good practice:** As an Outstanding school, Wright Robinson is well placed to offer support to other schools and Academy Status provides greater flexibility for support under the Flagship Learning Trust. Wright Robinson is an extremely popular school, with over 300 pupils on its waiting list for Year 7. Were the college to support other local schools under its Trust, this may prove beneficial for those pupils who were unsuccessful in gaining a place at the college's main site.
- **Financial budgets:** Academies receive funding directly from central government instead of via the local authority. This will include money that would previously have been held back by the local authority. An academy may also accumulate funds from private sources should it choose to. The college may be able to access more funding in order to better support the provision available for pupils.
- **National curriculum:** Academies do not have to follow the national curriculum as long as the curriculum remains 'broad and balanced'. This will provide us with greater flexibility to determine what best suits our children.
- **Admissions:** Academies are responsible for drawing up their own admissions criteria in line with the Admissions Code and SEN Code of Practice (the law). Academies are required to cater for children of all abilities (unless they were already selective). Wright Robinson, under its Foundation Status, already manages its own admissions under the Manchester Co-ordinated scheme, therefore no change in this area is envisaged.
- **Length of terms and school days:** Academies are free to set the length of its terms and school days. Wright Robinson will always take note of the Manchester City Council recommended holiday schedule.
- **Pay and terms of conditions of staff:** The academy is responsible for agreeing levels of pay, conditions of service, staffing structures, career development and appraisal. However, all existing staff transfer from the local authority under legislation known as TUPE regulations, which will protect their current conditions.

### Is an academy like a business?

No. A business makes profit for its shareholders. An academy is a charitable trust which cannot make profit.

### Who makes the decision to become an academy?

The governing body.

### Are academies bound by the same rules and regulations as other schools?

Academies are required to follow the law and guidance on admissions, special educational needs and exclusions.

## **THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM**

### **Will the academy follow the National Curriculum?**

Yes, but it would have more freedom to try different things in the curriculum and make sure that what is taught is relevant to our pupils and their specific needs.

## **PARTNERSHIP**

### **Does becoming an academy change the relationship with local schools and the community?**

No. Academy funding agreements state that they must ensure that the school will be at the heart of its community, collaborating and sharing facilities and expertise with other local schools and the wider community.

### **As an academy, will it still work with the local authority (LA)?**

Academies are independent of the local authority. However, we wish to continue working the LA, other local schools and local partners.

## **GOVERNANCE**

### **How does governance work?**

The Flagship Learning Trust has a board of Members who are ultimately responsible for the work of the Trust and any other schools/Academies which join the Trust. The Members Board will consist of five members from a variety of backgrounds (including Finance, Business and Education).

Under the Members Board will sit the Board of Trustees. The Trust board is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Trust school(s). The Trust board will also have responsibility for appointing the majority of the governors on each academy governing body, including the post of Chair of Governors.

Each academy has its own governing body who work with the academy Headteacher to ensure that the academy is making good progress. Each governing body has parent/carer representatives and a staff governor. The academy Headteacher is always a governor for the time they are employed in that role.

The governing body will set the vision for the academy in line with the overall commitment of the Flagship Learning Trust. The governing body also draft the academy spending plan and improvement plan for approval by the Trust Board.

A schedule of delegation will set out for each school in the trust, which delegated powers their governing body have.

## **FUNDING**

### **What will happen to our school's funding?**

The Department for Education meets the running costs for an academy in full. Academy funding is calculated on a like-for-like basis with local authority schools. Therefore, the academy will have a similar budget to that of its predecessor maintained school. With greater freedom to procure services from other providers and to realise cost efficiencies across the network, the academy will be able to make more efficient use of resources to support school improvement. Like other schools, an academy cannot run at a loss or agree a deficit budget, i.e. it has to break-even.

### **How will the school be accountable financially?**

An academy is governed by the rules and regulations for charitable trusts, e.g. we will be required to produce and file accounts and trustees cannot be paid. There will be robust systems with an audit conducted by an external independent auditor.

### **How does academy status affect SEN funding?**

SEN funding will come directly from the government through the Education Funding Agency. Funding allocated to a named child would continue to be funded directly by the local authority.

### **Does it cost to become an academy?**

Yes. There are legal costs associated with becoming an academy. The government gives each converting academy £25,000 to contribute towards these costs.

### **Who will own the school building and land?**

The Flagship Learning Trust will own the school building and land.

## **EMPLOYMENT AND STAFFING**

### **Will the staff stay the same?**

When a school converts from a local authority maintained school to a new academy, all permanent staff are entitled to transfer to it under the same employment terms and conditions.

### **Will the terms of employment for staff change?**

As part of TUPE arrangements, staff are entitled to transfer to the new academy under the same employment terms and conditions. However, it is essential that the academy is able to respond to the changing curriculum requirements and educational demands. This may therefore require consultation with staff and trade unions, once the academy has been established, on changes to terms and conditions of employment. This would be necessary if, for example, the Trust wished to introduce a particular organisational change to the academy's term dates, or if curriculum demands and the need for improved educational outcomes required a different leadership and organisational structure.

### **What will happen with regard to staff pensions?**

If you are a teacher in the current school, your pension will continue as part of the teacher's pension scheme, with the Trust continuing with the same employer responsibilities as the predecessor school. Non-teaching staff will usually be members of the local government pension scheme and the Trust will secure 'admitted body' status with the local pension authority to protect the pension rights of employees and take on employer responsibility, both for contributions and administration of the scheme. Staff can opt out of either if they wish to make alternative provision.

### **What happens if the headteacher leaves?**

The academy trust will work with the academy governors to appoint a new headteacher/principal.

## **CONSULTATION**

### **Will you consult with staff, community and parents?**

Yes, as part of our approach to project management for any new academy, we will consult with all key stakeholder groups during the transition phase. This will include the sharing of our plans for the new academy (known as the Expression of Interest) and an opportunity to gather feedback and suggestions, as well as addressing any questions or concerns. A clear consultation and communications strategy will be agreed with the college.

### **Will the Trust recognise and engage with our trade unions?**

Yes. The Flagship Learning Trust recognises the role of trade unions and sees positive engagement as critical to the transition process and ongoing success of the academy. They will play an important role in the consultation process on TUPE for staff.

## **ADMISSIONS**

### **Will the school remain non-selective?**

Yes - academies are non-selective schools. Academies are required to follow the law and guidance on admissions, special educational needs and exclusions as if they were maintained schools. It is the aim of the Trust to ensure that our academies provide high quality, inclusive education for local children.

The Department for Education website contains a wide range of information about becoming an academy.

<https://www.gov.uk/types-of-school/academies>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/10-facts-you-need-to-know-about-academies>