

*'...those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.'* Isaiah 40:31

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AQUILA – THE DIOCESE OF CANTERBURY ACADEMIES TRUST

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is an academy?

An academy is a publicly funded independent school that provides an excellent free education to local students of all abilities. They provide a teaching and learning environment that is in line with the best in the maintained sector and offer a broad and balanced curriculum to students of all abilities.

2. What benefits can an academy bring?

As well as providing the best opportunities for the most able students and those needing additional support, academies have a key part to play in the regeneration of communities and raising standards through innovative approaches to management, governance, teaching and the curriculum.

As an individual academy there is freedom for the Headteacher and governing body to decide how it is run, how money is budgeted, how staff are paid and how the curriculum is delivered to the pupils ensuring that specific needs of the pupils are met.

Within the Aquila academies schools work together to share best practice to make sure all pupils can access engaging learning opportunities, that teachers can continue to develop their practice and that schools can achieve good value for money.

3. How are academies managed?

They are run by a Headteacher or Principal and senior leadership team, all of whom are supported by a governing body. This body approved by a charitable Trust, which has strategic oversight of the academies.

4. What happens to my children at a school wishing to become an academy?

Pupils in such a position will transfer with the school to the academy without any need for them or their parents to do anything.

5. Will a proposed new academy have a new name?

This will be decided on an individual basis by consultation amongst staff and parents. Most of our academies have kept exactly the same name, including keeping the word 'school'.

6. Will a proposed new academy have a new uniform?

We do not intend to change the uniforms in any of our schools when they convert to academy status. If the leadership team within a school decided they wanted to change the uniform we would expect them to consult widely.

7. Will a proposed new academy still be open to community groups?

Since an academy seeks to be at the heart of a community it will therefore collaborate and share with other groups, schools and the wider community in things such as facilities, expertise, support and advise. As part of the Diocese, we would expect the local Church to be playing an important role in the academy.

8. How will an academy raise achievement?

The running of the academy will be based on the belief that everybody can achieve and that learning should be both exciting and smart. A high quality of leadership, providing staff and students with an engaging learning environment and a whole range of initiatives to support teachers, pupils and their families will be used in order to increase achievement. Furthermore, in order to improve on the schools' existing successes, the national curriculum will be followed where particular care is undertaken to help create a personalised programme for each student creating opportunities for everyone to achieve.

9. How will an academy respond to children with special needs or those who are talented or gifted?

The academy will recognise that each child is different but has the right to be included as a valued, respected and equal member of the learning community. Therefore the Academy will work within the framework of the Local Authority's SEN policies to help them where they can.

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10. How is Aquila linked to the Diocese of Canterbury?

The Diocese acts as the sponsor to some academies. The Trust Board has expertise from a range of schools and businesses but the Director of Diocesan Education is always a Director above the Board sits the Members, one of whom is always the Bishop and the other members must sit on or be represented at the Diocesan Board of Education level within the Diocese.

11. Will pupils' education be affected by a transition to academy status?

When an academy is approved to go ahead, it will do so with minimal disruption to the staff and students. This will be ensured by a detailed programme being created in order to outline the step-by-step guide on the progress. The main priority is to ensure the working environment for both staff and students is providing a first class standard of education.

12. How long is a sponsor committed to an academy?

Although there is no anticipated time limit for the Diocese to carry on its sponsorship, it has had a long standing commitment to education in its parish for over 100 years and so this is expected to continue.

13. What would happen if a proposed sponsor no longer wishes to be the sponsor?

In the unlikely event that the Diocese chooses to withdraw its sponsorship of the academy, two year's notice must be given and then the responsibility for the academy falls to the Secretary of State.

14. How is an academy funded and does this improve on current funding arrangements?

Academies 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. Headteachers and governors in academies have greater freedom over how they use these budgets to best benefit their students.

The Diocese, although does not provide any funding to the academies itself, will be looking at how all the funding available to the sponsored academies is used, including that previously retained by the local authority.

Aquila will be seeking to find efficiencies that allow for more resources to be made available to the academy and will be answerable to the Trust Board and the DfE for improving standards.

15. Who would own an academy building and site?

The site is owned by the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF) and will continue to be held in trust as it is at present to allow the current school to operate. This relationship is formalised with the Academy Trust via a Supplemental Agreement document.

16. Who would an academy governing body be accountable to?

The governing body of an academy is held accountable by the Trust Board. The Trust is accountable to the Secretary of State and is required to publish procedures of its meetings. As a company limited by guarantee Aquila must prepare and file an independently audited annual report and accounts with Companies House.

17. Will the school hours be any different as an academy?

Although it is unlikely that the school day will be changed, it is the decision of the individual academy to decide this as they have the power to do so. Parents will be consulted on this prior to a decision being made.

18. How will parents be represented?

An elected parent governor will be represented on the governing body as a requirement.