

You will find answers to the most frequently asked questions about our academy conversion proposal in this section. However, if you have a question that is not answered here please look at the **Have your say** section for ways to let us have your additional comments and questions.

What is an academy?

Academies are schools that are funded directly by the Department for Education. That means that they have greater freedoms and flexibilities as they are independent from their Local Authority (LA). Schools that are performing well can apply to become academies.

Each academy or group of academies takes the legal form of a charitable trust known as an Academy Trust and is governed by a Board of Trustees. The Trust Board of The Graveney Trust is formed from governors from Graveney and some from Tooting Primary.

The existing Governing Body of Franciscan Primary School will continue to oversee the work of the school up until the date of conversion and will then become a Local Governing Body (LGB) of the Trust. The LGB will retain many of its current responsibilities but will have the added support of working within a Trust that is entirely focused on ensuring pupils achieve to the best of their ability. We will continue to look for, and appoint, governors with a wide range of skills and from different backgrounds.

What are the advantages of joining Graveney Trust?

In addition to securing our independence, there are a number of practical advantages:

Working in a formal partnership initially with Graveney and Tooting Primary (and as they grow to include more schools) will mean that we will be able to offer excellent all-through educational experiences to our local community. This will mean increased opportunities for pupils and for staff such as: co-curricular opportunities across the schools for pupils, teachers working closely on planning and assessing the curriculum across Key Stages 2 and 3, close liaison over primary to secondary transition, and so on.

Academies have control of all of their spending. We would be better able to ensure our focus and investment in the core purpose of the school – teaching and learning.

By working in a multi-academy trust we would be better able to ensure value for money in the services that we choose to buy in to support the school and the Trust.

As an academy, Franciscan will be able to apply to central Government agencies for funding that is not available to us as a Local Authority school.

As an academy in the Trust we will be able to cope better with change and challenges, such as staff turnover etc.

What will it cost the school to convert?

Schools receive a conversion grant of £25,000. This will cover the costs of conversion and will mean that no funding for pupils will be diverted as part of this process.

How will the school change?

There will be very little that will change in the day to day running of the school. Keeping all that is special about the school is one of the drivers for conversion.

There will be no immediate or significant changes in our curriculum delivery. As now, any changes we do make to what we teach and how we teach it are driven in response to the needs of pupils. The act of becoming an academy will not require us to make any changes.

There will still be governors for the school. They will be part of a Local Governing Body and as they are now will be drawn from a range of backgrounds. There will also still be elected parents on the Local Governing Body. We intend to ensure a high level of continuity in our governance during the conversion period.

Academies have a range of explicit freedoms not available to Local Authority schools, including setting the pay and conditions of staff and setting their own term dates. However, the governors at Franciscan are committed to adhering to national agreements on pay and conditions and have no plans to alter term dates if the school becomes an academy.

The employment rights of all current members of staff will be protected by TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment) Regulations. This means that the staff will transfer to The Graveney Trust under the same terms and conditions of employment they enjoy now. Pension rights and continuity of service record will be preserved. A separate process regarding TUPE will be undertaken with the staff later in the Autumn Term.

The school will be subject to the exact same regime and cycle of Ofsted inspections as now.

Are you being forced to become an academy?

No. Only schools that are failing are forced to become an academy. We are a 'Good' school and like a number of schools in Wandsworth are choosing to become an academy. This places us in the strong position of being able to choose when we convert to an academy and which multi-academy trust we join.

Will class sizes go up?

No, not as a result of becoming an academy.

Will teaching and learning change?

No, not as a result of becoming an academy.

Will you change the admissions policy of the school?

No. If we convert to an academy the Local Authority ceases to be our admissions authority and instead the Trust will have this responsibility. However, we will still be required to follow the statutory Admissions Code and we have no plans to change our current arrangements.

Will pupils with special educational needs still be welcomed and receive the same support as they do now?

Yes. As an academy we would continue to provide for the range of needs of all the pupils on roll and, where a student has a Statement/EHC Plan, they will continue to receive the support required by it.

Will the age range remain the same?

Yes.

Who will I be able to complain to if I am unhappy with the school?

Currently parents are encouraged to address any concerns or issues they have to the class teacher in the first instance, followed by a Senior Leader. Beyond that parents can complain to the Headteacher and/or the governors. If necessary a complaint can go on to the Local Authority.

If the school becomes an academy the same process will apply but instead of the Local Authority a parent can complain to the Trustees of The Graveney Trust.

Will the school have enough money to supply all the services it needs when it leaves the LA?

Yes. Budgets are under pressure in all schools, but by being in partnership with Graveney and Tooting Primary we will be able to generate savings as we can buy and run services more efficiently and effectively as a group of schools. This opportunity will increase as more schools choose to join the Trust.

Will transport arrangements remain the same?

Yes.

Will staff stay the same?

Yes. All staff will transfer to The Graveney Trust under the TUPE process previously outlined.

My child receives Free School Meals. Will they continue to do so if the school becomes an academy?

Yes they will.

Will the uniform change if the school becomes an academy?

Yes. We are planning to update our uniform to ensure greater consistency around what is worn.

Will the school be better funded as an academy?

There is no financial gain in becoming an academy. However, as an academy we will have more financial flexibility, particularly working within a multi-academy trust.

Could there be cuts to academy funding in the future?

We know that the Government is conducting a review of school funding that may have a negative impact on schools in London. These changes, however, will apply to academies and Local Authority schools equally.

The Trust and the Local Governing Body will remain responsible for setting a balanced budget each year. By being part of a multi-academy trust, however, the

school may be able to make savings on some of the goods and services it buys to run the school.

It appears that some teaching unions are against schools becoming academies. If this is indeed the case, doesn't the school run the risk of alienating the teachers and other staff who make the school so successful?

We know how talented and committed our staff at Franciscan are and we will continue to attract and retain the best staff team possible. We are committed to involving all members of staff in consultation as we go forward and will be meeting all unions representing school employees to explain our proposals. As outlined above, we do not intend to change terms and conditions so staff will be protected as we transfer to academy status. Graveney Trust has adopted both the Teachers Pay and Conditions arrangements and the Local Government arrangements for the pay and conditions for support staff. The only exception is that Graveney Trust teaching employees are required to give and are entitled to receive one full term's notice of their intention to leave.

What input do parents have as part of the consultation/decision-making process?

This consultation forms part of the overall consultation process. Parents' views, alongside those of other stakeholders, will be considered by Governors as part of the decision making process. The Governors will, however, make the final decision on whether to convert to an academy once they have considered any responses to the consultation and are satisfied that all of the legal processes required to convert have been completed satisfactorily.

How would academy conversion affect other local schools?

If we become an academy we will continue to work with schools in the borough.

What will happen to the school's links with the Local Authority?

The change of status will bring greater independence from the Local Authority but we will continue to work in partnership with the Authority and may continue to buy services from them.

Will the school need to change its name?

The governors have decided to change the school name to Franciscan House (subject to further discussion) in order to communicate to the wider community that Franciscan is now an academy.

Where can I find further information about academies?

You can find further information on the Department for Education website at this link

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/academies/academiesfaq/a0066018/conversion-process>