

## **Central Bedfordshire Parent Partnership Service**

### **Information sheet on Academies**

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

Academies are independent, state-funded schools, who receive their funding directly from central government, rather than through the local authority. They have greater freedoms over other state schools over their finances, curriculum, length of terms and school days and have the ability to set their own pay and conditions for staff.

#### **Why have academies emerged?**

Academies were originally a policy designed to improve struggling schools, primarily in deprived areas, but the process has been speeded up and radically changed. **All** schools have been invited to convert to Academy status, but priority is being given to 'outstanding' or schools 'performing well' so deemed by Ofsted. Schools that do not fall into these two categories may also apply but in a formal partnership with an outstanding or a good school.

#### **What are the main hopes for academies?**

The idea is to spread good practice from the best schools. By putting more power into the hands of head teachers and cutting bureaucracy it is hoped that standards will improve considerably.

#### **Why do some academies have sponsors?**

Some academies, generally those set up to replace underperforming schools, will have a sponsor. Sponsors can include another school, a successful business, a university a charity or a faith body. Sponsors are held accountable for improving the performance of their school and their vision and leadership are vital to each project. The idea is to challenge traditional ways that schools are run and they should seek to break the cultures of low aspirations and achievement.

#### **Where does the funding come from?**

Academies receive their funding from the Young People's Learning Agency (Education Funding Agency from April 2012), which is an agency of the Department for Education, rather than from local authorities.

Each school receives £25,000 towards changing to an academy from the Department of Education, but then can potentially top up their budget by as much as 10% as they will get money previously held back by the local authority to provide services like special needs support. The school may not have as much need of those services, or could buy them in more cheaply. Academies will still receive the regular per pupil funding as they did before but will have greater freedom over how they use their budgets to best benefit their students.

### **Who are academies accountable to?**

Like all schools, they are still subject to Ofsted inspections and answer directly to the education secretary. However, many newly formed academies will be outstanding schools which will no longer be subject to routine inspections as there have been changes made to the education inspection regime. The Department for Education will still publish data and exam results from Academies as it does for other schools.

### **What will stay the same?**

Academies are required to follow the law and guidance on **admissions, special educational needs and exclusions** just as if they were a maintained school.

- **Admissions** - Academy trusts become the admissions authorities for their schools-rather than the local authority. The academy can, like a faith school, set its own criteria for awarding places if it is over subscribed. Schools with specialisms are allowed to select up to 10% of their pupils on the basis of their aptitude for a particular subject. Many academies fall into this category.
- **Exclusions** – Academies have to follow the law and government guidance on excluding pupils, but they do not have to consult the local authority before deciding to exclude a pupil and they can arrange their own appeals panel.

If schools currently select some or all of their pupils, they can continue to do so if they become an academy, but schools becoming academies cannot become newly selective schools.

Academies should ensure that they will be at the heart of the community, collaborating and sharing facilities and expertise with other schools and the wider community. It is expected that all high performing schools applying for academy status to partner a weaker school.

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 applies to both maintained schools and academies.

### **Which schools are already Academies in Central Bedfordshire?**

Alameda Academy – 9-13 - Station Road, Ampthill

All Saints Academy – 13-18 - Houghton Rd, Dunstable

Arnold Academy – 9-13 - Hexton Road, Barton

Eaton Bray Academy – 4-9 - School Lane, Eaton Bray

Lark Rise Academy – 3-9 - Cartmel Drive, Dunstable

Linslade Academy – 9-13 - Mentmore Road, Leighton Buzzard

Redbourne Academy – 13-18 - Flitwick Road, Ampthill

Robert Bloomfield Academy – 9-13 - Bloomfield Drive, Shefford

Sandy Place Academy – 9-13 - Park Road, Sandy

Vandyke Academy – 13-18 - Vandyke Road, Leighton Buzzard

Woodland Academy – 9-13 Malham Close, Flitwick