



Newnham St Peter's Church of England Primary  
School

**“Learning together, achieving forever”**

**CONSULTATION**  
**Consideration of conversion to academy**  
**status as part of the Diocese of Gloucester**  
**Academies Trust April 2018**

## Background

The purpose of successive governments' academies programme is to give every school the opportunity to decide whether to continue under the umbrella of the Local Authority (LA), or whether to become an academy (an independent state-funded school). As a school, we have an obligation to consider whether or not we should convert to an academy and we are mindful of the Government's view that all schools should become academies over time.

In 2016 we consulted with you on the proposal to become part of a Multi Academy Trust and this was accepted and incorporated into our published Strategic Plan 2016-2020 (available since 2016 on the school website).

The governors of Newnham St Peter's Church of England Primary School have carefully considered the options in terms of which multi academy trust (MAT), and following extensive research and discussions, have concluded that converting to academy status in 2019 would significantly benefit the school. We (Governors and staff) have concluded that the specific MAT we would wish to join is the Diocese of Gloucester Academies Trust (DGAT).

In considering the various possibilities open to our school, the leadership team and governors have kept the following at the forefront of our thinking:

- 1. What is in the best interests of the children in our school, both now and looking ahead to those who will attend in the years to come?**
- 2. How can we best preserve the school's distinctive Christian ethos and continue to adhere to our vision statement?**
- 3. Will we retain a significant role in running our school at a local level?**

This document presents a summary of the extensive research and thinking of the governors so far, in order to inform the wider school and local community.

Acronym	Meaning
C of E	Church of England
DfE	Department for Education
DGAT	Diocese of Gloucester Academies Trust
EFA	Education Funding Agency
LA	Local Authority
MAT	Multi-Academy Trust

## The Opportunity

Newnham St Peter's School has the opportunity to join a MAT that is already established by Gloucester Diocese for church and non-church schools (DGAT). This means that DGAT would support the school in becoming an academy, without the need for the school to establish a separate charitable trust and a limited liability company. The school would still maintain a governing body, but it would be accountable to the Diocese rather than the LA. One of the school's governors can join the Board of Trustees to ensure that the views of the school are represented and to convey information from the Trust back to the school.

DGAT is a single legal entity, promoting strong collaboration among member schools and accountability to improve standards and quality. It is committed to improving staff development and supports schools working together. It can negotiate contracts and services that achieve much better value for money than each school negotiating individually. Additionally, there has been an impressive success rate in bids for capital funding. Since conception, DGAT has secured approximately £1m for improvements to its schools.

This document has been produced as a result of the preliminary consultation process and provides all stakeholders of the school with information about the implications of Newnham St Peter's C of E school becoming an academy. The information has been drawn from a number of sources (with particular thanks to Lechlade C of E School) and was accurate at the time of the consultation process.

## **What is an Academy?**

An academy is an independent, non-fee paying state school, which is funded by and accountable to the Department of Education (DfE), rather than being under LA control. Academies are charitable companies, limited by guarantee. Academies are run by Academy Trusts, which own / lease the premises and assets and employ the staff. Primary schools are able to convert to academies under the Academies Act 2010.

### **How do academies differ from LA controlled schools?**

Like all schools, academies are required to offer a broad and balanced curriculum, provide an education for pupils of all abilities and educate pupils who are drawn from a local area. However, academies do have greater additional freedoms compared to LA controlled schools and these are intended to help the school to innovate and continue to raise standards. This means that governing bodies and head teachers have more control over curriculum delivery and the way the school is organised and managed.

### **How are academies funded?**

In LA controlled schools, the LA provides the school's budget and will retain a proportion of this budget to fund some central functions. Maintained schools also purchase some services from the LA such as payroll services, financial management systems and buildings maintenance. Schools then choose how to spend the rest of their budget. The vast majority of a school's budget is usually spent on staffing and essential services, such as utilities.

In contrast, academies receive their entire budget directly from central government from the Education Funding Agency (EFA) without any 'top slice' being taken by the LA. An academy is then free to choose independently how to purchase services. Academies can still opt to buy some services from the LA if they choose to. Academies are therefore responsible for securing best-value in the procurement of a wide-range of supplies and services.

### **What financial 'buffer' would exist if the Local Authority no longer supports the school?**

Academies are not allowed to run a deficit budget without having in place a remedial action plan, which will eliminate the deficit. Any academy that opens with a transferred deficit will need to agree a plan with the EFA, at the earliest opportunity, to repay the deficit in instalments from the annual budget. In the same way that LA controlled schools that find themselves in financial difficulty have to agree a recovery plan with their LA, academies that develop a deficit after opening will have to agree a recovery plan with the EFA.

The Diocese of Gloucester Education Trust has established a MAT in order to support Church of England (C of E) and community primary schools within the Diocese. The aim of the Trust is to provide children of **all faiths and none** with excellent educational provision within a distinctively caring and supportive Christian ethos.

Schools that work in close collaboration can opt to establish their own MAT. Other schools may opt to join existing MATs, which have been established by either commercial or charitable bodies.

### **Advantages of joining the Diocese of Gloucester Academies Trust**

C of E primary schools joining DGAT will further strengthen an already established relationship with the Diocese. The Trust's primary aim is to secure educational excellence in its schools.

The Governing Board of Newnham St Peter's C of E School believe that by joining DGAT, we will be able to achieve the best educational outcomes for our pupils and retain our strong local identity and Christian ethos.

### **Teaching & learning**

- **Collaboration** - We welcome the opportunity to extend collaboration and work closely with the principals of member trust schools and the Academy Development Partners (education advisors employed by the trust), enjoying the benefits of greater joint accountability and tighter links.
- **Capacity and expertise** - Being part of the academy trust will enable Newnham St Peter's to access training, advice and financial support to facilitate effective practice. Whilst we have an experienced staff and governor team at the present time, we are keen to develop and sustain into the future. We feel the Academy Development Partner model will provide the right balance of support, rigour and challenge to move the school forward towards our aim of delivering outstanding education to the children in and around Newnham.

### **Identity**

- **Identity as a school within the community** - At Newnham St Peter's C of E school we are immensely proud and respectful of the position we hold within our community and conversion to academy status should not change this. By joining DGAT, we feel that we will protect the uniqueness of the school whilst adding capacity and accountability. Our aims and values match closely to those of the trust.
- **Christian Ethos and Values** - As a Voluntary Aided C of E School with a very recent 'outstanding' SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools) judgement, we hold our Christian distinctiveness in high esteem. The philosophy of DGAT and its close relationship with the Diocesan Board of Education is the ideal match for our continued relationship with the Church of England and development of our ethos and Christian foundation.

## Summary

<b>Area</b>	<b>Current System</b>	<b>Academy</b>
<b>Accountability</b>	<p>Directly accountable to the Governing Board, LA and Diocese together as an LA school and then the DfE.</p> <p>Governors can be removed by the LA, via a request to the DfE if the school does not meet the required standards set by the DfE (known as 'going into a category').</p>	<p>DGAT works with the governors to determine the amount of responsibility given to each Governing Body, dependent on circumstances.</p> <p>DfE (through the newly appointed Regional Schools Commissioner) has oversight of the MAT and approves and ratifies constitution.</p>
<b>Governance</b>	<p>Board of Governors who currently act as employers for the staff. Elected by foundation, LA and parents.</p>	<p>Local governors appointed by the MAT and parent governors appointed by election. Governors are accountable to the MAT.</p>
<b>Funding</b>	<p>8% of funding goes directly to the LA to provide statutory services, Special Educational Needs (SEN) services, Financial Services Management (FSM) and LAC. The remaining money goes to school. VAT exempt.</p> <p>School buys in traded services.</p> <p>Governors provide 10% of capital programmes from the school fund.</p> <p>Accounts submitted to LA for monitoring.</p> <p>Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS) and LA monitoring as required.</p> <p>Subsidised costs for some licences and copyright.</p>	<p>5% of funding goes to the MAT to provide statutory/support services. The remaining money goes to school. The MAT will look for economies of scale in purchasing where possible.</p> <p>VAT paid, but then claimed back.</p> <p>School buys in traded services.</p> <p>No 10 % contribution required from Governors for the school's capital projects.</p> <p>Auditors appointed by the Trust and year end accounts produced. New financial accounts produced. New financial system employed.</p> <p>SFVS still required.</p> <p>Copyright and license full cost to be met.</p>
<b>Curriculum</b>	<p>All schools in the maintained sector must follow the National Curriculum. Statutory Tests must be carried out at set periods.</p>	<p>Ability to determine own curriculum. Statutory tests must still be carried out.</p>
<b>Safeguarding</b>	<p>School answers to the local safeguarding board. Guidance and training bought in as a traded service.</p>	<p>School still has to relate to the local safeguarding board. Guidance and training bought in by DGAT from the Gloucestershire safeguarding board.</p>
<b>Health and safety</b>	<p>Statutory responsibility to ensure that all standards are met.</p> <p>School monitored and supported by LA Safety, Health &amp; Environment (SHE) unit. Bought in as a traded service.</p>	<p>Statutory responsibility to ensure that all standards are met.</p> <p>School able to buy in service as a traded service.</p>

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<b>Staffing</b>	<p>Employed by the Board of Governors.          National pay agreement in place.          LA provides statutory policies and guidance for working practice as set by the DfE.          Insurance bought in as a traded service. Provides vast cost of maternity cover and sickness benefits.</p>	<p>Employed by the MAT, transferred in accordance with the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) (TUPE) Regulations procedure. No change to terms and conditions.          National pay agreement would still be met.          MAT provides policies and guidance for working practice as set by the DfE.          Insurance bought through MAT. Provides support for maternity cover and sickness benefits.</p>
<b>Buildings</b>	<p>The Diocese is landlord of most of the site.          Diocese can apply annually for Local Co-ordinated Voluntary Aided Programme (LCVAP) funding.</p>	<p>The Diocese is the custodial trustee of the site. MAT signs a supplemental agreement for continued use of the site as an academy.          The trust will prepare bids for school builds where improvement or expansion is required, through the Academy Capital Maintenance Programme.</p>
<b>SEN / Looked after children</b>	<p>Statutory responsibility to provide for these services by the LA.          Funding for these children met by the LA in part.</p>	<p>Statutory duty of care remains with the LA, but the school can purchase assessment and support services from LA or alternative providers.</p>

## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. How many academies will be in DGAT?

At present 15 schools have joined DGAT. It is envisaged that eventually DGAT will grow. However, this will be determined by demand from schools in Gloucestershire and with the permission of the DfE.

### 2. How long does it take for a school to become an Academy?

Most schools can convert to academy status in about five months, after achieving the initial DfE approval to proceed. We are hoping to work towards April 2019 being the conversion date.

### 3. Do schools need to consult before converting?

Yes. All schools are required to carry out a consultation, but it is up to each school to decide whom and how to consult. There is no legally specified length of time for the consultation and schools have flexibility in how it is conducted. We are currently consulting with parents, all staff, Newnham and Awre church communities, local Parochial Church Councils and the local community. We will also conduct information sessions for pupils.

### 4. How are we consulting with stakeholders?

The consultation period lasts from Friday 20<sup>th</sup> April to 31<sup>st</sup> May 2018.

A consultation meeting is being held on Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> April at 3pm in the school hall to answer any questions. After the consultation closes, the Governing Board will then vote on academy status as part of DGAT at their following meeting and we will inform all stakeholders of the decision made. After this point, we will continue to communicate and consult through a variety of methods to ensure that everyone is kept up-to-date and that all views are considered.

If parents, staff and the community have additional questions to ask, please email or deliver them to the school FAO Chair of Governors. These FAQs will be updated regularly on our website.

### 5. What does the conversion process involve?

After carrying out its own due diligence, the Governing Board must take the following key steps:

- Consult on becoming an academy as part of DGAT
- Obtain the Secretary of State's initial consent by securing an 'Academy Order'
- Agree a supplementary funding agreement with the DfE and DGAT
- Ensure that the school site is made available to the Academy Trust via leases and/or supplemental agreements
- Ensure that financial systems are in place to manage funding
- Transfer, renew or procure new contracts, service level agreements and licences and purchase insurance as appropriate
- Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (TUPE) all contract arrangements for staff. This is a formal legal consultation process that is separate from the consultation with all stakeholders. This would not start until after the vote by the Governing Board to apply for academy status.

**6. Does the school have to change its name or uniform?**

No. The name of the school does not have to change and the uniform requirements do not have to change either. The updating of the school logo, which will begin in September 2018 as part of a review of the school values, will be phased into our equipment and uniform for April 2019.

**7. Will the school be able to set its own curriculum?**

Academies are able to offer a more flexible curriculum, but they are required to provide a 'balanced and broadly-based curriculum'. The teaching of English, Maths and Science would remain central to the curriculum and, as a church school, RE will remain a 'core' subject. The teachers and governors will work with DGAT to implement the curriculum to best meet the needs of its pupils using the freedom available.

**8. What would happen to SEND provision?**

We would continue to provide the same support for all pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, indeed the funding for this element continues to be provided by the LA. The LA retains its responsibility for statutory duties and obligations. Procedures remain in place when a school converts to academy status.

**9. Will academies be free from Ofsted inspections?**

No. Academies remain fully under Ofsted's inspection arrangements.

**10. What happens to all of the staff?**

All staff will be entitled to transfer, under TUPE regulations, to the Academy with the same terms and conditions as at present.

**11. Can academies alter the pay and conditions of employees?**

When a school converts to a new academy, employees are entitled to transfer under the same employment terms and conditions. There is a legal process to go through called TUPE, but staff maintain existing pay, conditions and length of service. Alterations can only be made in the same way as they would have been made under the LA. For example, changes to pay and annual leave are negotiated with employees' representatives. This position will continue unless and until the contract of employment is varied with the agreement of the employee.

It's important to note that there are no plans to alter the pay and conditions of staff. Of course, any changes made nationally would apply.

**12. How will union membership (NUT, NASUWT, Unison, etc.) work?**

Union recognition would remain as it currently stands. All employees are entitled to be part of a union.

**13. Do we have enough support staff to cope with the change of status?**

As we are proposing to join DGAT, many of the additional tasks associated with conversion and academy status are met by the Trust. It is not anticipated that further support staff would be required. However, the Governing Body would keep this under review.

**14. Would we be able to buy services such as HR and payroll more cheaply if the school was not buying from the local authority?**

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DGAT will procure some services on behalf of schools in DGAT and will be able to negotiate better deals for a group of schools. The Governing Body will be able to procure services from a wider range of providers (and can continue to buy some services from the LA, where they are still available).

#### **15. How do the staff feel about conversion as part of DGAT?**

Staff are fully involved in the discussion regarding conversion. Meetings for staff, with representatives from DGAT, have been and will be held in order to answer questions both about the process and being part of DGAT. The views of the staff are held in the highest regard by the governors and school leaders. Ensuring that all viewpoints and concerns are listened to is a critical part of the conversion process.

#### **16. What are the admission requirements for schools converting to become academies?**

No changes are proposed to the admissions criteria or catchment area. However, if any changes are proposed to admission arrangements in the future, there would be a full consultation prior to any changes being made. We will continue to publish our admission arrangements on our website well in advance of each academic year.

The LA retains responsibility for co-ordination of admission arrangements for entry into Reception.

#### **17. How are academies funded?**

Academies receive the same level of per-pupil funding that they would receive from the LA, plus additions to cover the services that are no longer provided for them by the LA. Financially it will make very little difference to the school budget.

#### **18. Do we have to cover the full cost to convert to an Academy?**

No. The DfE currently pay a flat-rate grant of £25,000 and the conversion is not expected to impact on the school's revenue budget.

#### **19. Will there be a capital fund or a specific grant for insurance to cover for emergencies in academies?**

Academies are required to cover insurance at specified minimum levels of cover. DGAT will ensure that the necessary insurance is in place through the DfE's approved insurance scheme.

#### **20. Who would own the land and buildings?**

The land and buildings remain in their current ownership by the Diocese of Gloucester but are made available to the academy via a 125-year lease and/or a supplemental agreement.

#### **21. Will we retain the existing financial systems?**

The financial system will change to better reflect the requirements of an academy trust and meet the company accounts requirements.

#### **22. How would we get a capital building project carried out?**

DGAT is now part of a pooled capital funding scheme, which is awarded an annual allocation from the DfE. This is allocated to schools on the basis of our condition surveys. Our condition survey will be updated as part of the conversion process.

We will continue to receive an annual allocation for small capital projects as we do currently.

#### **23. What are the expected changes to the Governing Board?**

*CONSULTATION - Consideration of conversion to academy status as part of DGAT April 2018*  
DGAT has a central board of trustees, appointed by the Diocese. This board is responsible to the Secretary of State for overall standards for each school in DGAT and for maintaining a strategic oversight of the Trust. A Local Governing Body will be responsible for the day-to-day operational matters. The existing commitment of the present governors and Clerk will continue to be available, but within the Governing Body.

**24. Becoming an Academy will require a strong and effective Governing Body. How will we find the governors with the necessary skills, experience and time?**

Being part of DGAT means that the board of directors will have the necessary range of skills required at a strategic level. The Local Governing Body does not take on the additional requirements under the Companies Act and therefore, we feel it will be easier to fill the positions.

Recruiting and retaining governors with key skills and experience remains a key task for all schools and DGAT is committed to supporting governors in their role.

**25. What will happen to local links and partnerships that we already have?**

These will continue. Joining DGAT does not preclude us from being part of local partnerships, which are for the benefit of the school. Newnham St Peter's has been an active member of the West Gloucestershire Support Partnership known as WGSP, made up of Forest schools and this will continue.

## Responding to this consultation

The Governing Board welcomes responses or questions relating to this consultation. Please email these to the chair of governors via the email:

[Chair@newnham-st-peter.gloucs.sch.uk](mailto:Chair@newnham-st-peter.gloucs.sch.uk)

**All responses must be received before the consultation closing date of 12 noon on Friday 31<sup>st</sup> May 2018.**

The Governing Body will, where appropriate, attempt to answer any questions asked and these will be placed in the public forum on the school website to view. A summary report of the outcomes of the consultation will also be published.