

## ST GEORGES VA SCHOOL – RESPONSE TO ACADEMY CONSULTATION

	<b>STAFF QUESTIONS</b>	<b>answers</b>
<b>1.</b>	Please clarify any changes in respect of the County funded AST role. It is hoped this will not change as it brings considerable benefit to the School. Will there be any change to pay or conditions of centrally funded ASTs?	The School Business Manager replies: County advise that as long as the Academy continues to honour their 1 day outreach work for each AST, they will continue to receive the funding for that AST. There is uncertainty about the funding for next year, but that is across the board for AST funding, not related to Academies
<b>2.</b>	Please confirm if there are to be any changes the existing pay and conditions for staff.	No such changes are intended or planned
<b>3.</b>	Who owns land; is it HCC or Church?	The current Foundation Company (St George’s School Harpenden Limited) operates in the same manner as an academy trust would. Currently HCC own the freehold of playing fields and the Company owns the buildings. Under Academy status HCC will offer leasehold for the playing fields.
<b>4.</b>	Finances – how much income would the school expect to receive under Academy Status	325k for the initial year, unknown for subsequent years. The uncertain budget situation is no different than if the School was not an Academy.
<b>5.</b>	What happened to the SJL/RPS Trust?	The two schools were going to do this prior to applying for Academy status; they now are separate Academy Trusts
<b>6.</b>	Should a school become academy, what advice give will it to employees regarding changes to continuous service with academy status? For example if someone works for an Academy and applies for a position in a non academy school	Response from Union representative: Most academies seem to be offering same T&CS. Hertfordshire will recognise service – but if the new position is outside of County, service may be broken. Sickness & holiday - if you go back to LA school, Academy service would not count as continuous. Support staff would have to start again. There is currently no case law to support any view as it is a new process. The process is rapidly evolving – academies will need to consult with other academies to determine if maternity entitlement and length of service can be carried on.

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	STAKEHOLDER QUESTIONS	answers
<b>7.</b>	What are the positive reasons for changing given everything appears to be staying the same?	Greater autonomy and some greater financial gain.
<b>8.</b>	Please advise benefits of Academy Conversion, commenting on continuity and what will tangibly change.	As above.
<b>9.</b>	I urge the School to ensure the financial and HR staff are trained and able to deal with the changes they will be dealing with.	This is being addressed.
<b>10.</b>	Concerns about possible changes to admissions criteria and its effect on inclusion and diversity.	There are no plans to make any changes in these areas. As a result of moving to Academy status.
<b>11.</b>	How is the school planning to compensate for future lack of access to existing LA services – eg: Educational Psychology.	Most services are now on a purchase and use scheme (traded services). Academies have to expect to use their funding for this.
<b>12.</b>	Concerns about the ongoing provision for those with Special Education al Needs – confirmation that this will be maintained.	Special needs funding is already severely limited by the delegated budget and the Governors will continue to allocate resources as fairly as possible in the light of the schools income
<b>13.</b>	Will there be any effect on boarding fees as a result of Academy Status?	There is not expected to be a boarding free increase because of a move to Academy Status
<b>14.</b>	The following points relate to the Stakeholder Letter. Para 1, page 1: Which additional “freedoms” will the School choose to take up?	More freedom of services purchased and how the school will spread it delegated budget
<b>15.</b>	Will the School consider changing the length of school day? Or terms?	There are currently no plans to do this.
<b>16.</b>	Are there any plans to effect changes to the 14-19 education as a result of Academy Status?	There are currently no plans to do this.
<b>17.</b>	How would the school use freedom around the curriculum?	We would need to maintain the current curriculum, but could if we wished consider curriculum change which would be appropriate for the school and its pupils.

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<b>18.</b>	How will freedom from LA control manifest itself?	Outwardly few would realise that we had become an academy. The major impact would be within our internal management and organisation
<b>19.</b>	How does the school envisage future use of the budget, given more freedom with it?	A greater freedom to purchase services and focus investment and development where we want.
<b>20.</b>	What is financial benefit to the School of Academy Status?	See question 19.
<b>21.</b>	Who will be appointed Trustees of the Academy Trust and how will they be appointed?	The present Governors would be appointed on the formation of the Academy Trust.
<b>22.</b>	Will this body supersede the Governing Body?	Yes.
<b>23.</b>	In what way is it envisaged that the Governors will “give parents maximum representation” on making decisions on the “composition of the Governing Body”? Will this be enshrined in a new set of rules of governance or will this be agreed by the Governors from time to time?	There will be a new set of rules of governance that are set by the Department of Education.
<b>24.</b>	How will the “existing categories of governance” change, if at all?	It is not envisaged that these will change.
<b>25.</b>	Which freedoms does the School see as relevant to its development under Academy Status?	The main thrust here would be the capacity of the school to a) receive all of its funding directly and b) to have greater flexibility in which services we purchase and where we purchase these services from. It is expected that the school will gain greater “value for money” for the services that it invests in.
<b>26.</b>	Please define “our commitment to cooperation with other agencies” and have some practical examples of how academy status will allow the school to continue to focus on raising standards and broadening opportunity.	We will continue the work we do with local primary schools and other education establishments and with further finding and greater freedom to broaden the curriculum, hope to broaden opportunities and raise standards.
<b>27.</b>	Wording “subject to funding” seems to imply the School could withdraw its collaborative working with partner schools if it deemed appropriate. IS this an option the School would consider?	The school will always seek to maintain links with other schools within the area. The consortium working arrangement post 16 enables us to offer pupils within our care a greater range of 6th form courses. We re-evaluate this arrangement every year. Our

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		Primary partner work has been part of the schools Specialist Status. Funding for both the sixth form and the Specialist areas of the school is being, and will continue to be cut over the next 4 years. The school will seek to continue these activities should funding and staffing allow.
<b>28.</b>	Governance. How would the governing body's greater autonomy be used?	To benefit the students and community of St. Georges.
<b>29.</b>	Supporting a weaker school. Will the school be engaged with this?	The school is already engaged in helping weaker schools. The school support 4 AST's (Advanced Skills Teachers) who are released for one day a week to assist in school who need assistance
<b>30.</b>	Language and Technical Specialism Status. Would school retain its specialist status and keep the same funding?	The school is keeping both of its Technology College Status and its MFL status. The funding for these, which used to come into school as a specific allocation has been adsorbed into the School Delegated Budget. As this funding is now part of the "bulk" amount the school receives it is impossible to tell if this specific element of the budget has been reduced. We know that is has already been cut!
<b>31.</b>	Inspections. Does an Academy fall under the same regime as currently? If not in which way will the school's performance be measured?	Academies are still monitored under the Ofsted process. Most of the information gathered is the same; it is just that all information is sent directly to central government rather than into the county.
<b>32.</b>	Sponsorship. It appears academies may take sponsorship from donors and that said donors may require tailoring of the school's curriculum or ethos in exchange. Would the school consider accepting sponsorship and from which bodies or agencies? Will guidelines on acceptance be published? Will stakeholders be consulted on acceptance? Can the school guarantee that it will remain independent of the wishes of a donor if it accepts sponsorship?	The School would not enter into agreements that would adversely impact the day to day running of the school.
<b>33.</b>	The School has benefited greatly from its link to HCC especially in the allocation of capital funds. Would the school be as well provided if funds were allocated directly from	The answer to this point has not yet been given by the Government.

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	Whitehall?	
<b>34.</b>	Whilst greater parent empowerment is desirable, it is important that parents should not dominate, as emphasis could be directed towards short term goals, ie: within the time span of their children already in the school, rather than long term developments.	Parents have a representative voice on the Governing Body. Under the guidelines for conversion to Academy Status the Governing Body is not required to consult with any specific body of people. It has done so out of mark of respect for the parental body, and also out of genuine desire to hear the views of different stakeholder groups. It will as always endeavour to make the best decisions for the school that it can.
<b>35.</b>	Mention is made of the Govt’s code of practice for Admissions. Does this mean the admissions policy could move away from the long held policy which does not allow selection by ability?	According to the School Admissions Code, no school is allowed to introduce selection by ability which does not currently use such selection. Academy status has no bearing on this.
<b>36.</b>	The whole idea of academies seems contrary to the avowed policy of all major political parties to decentralise Government.	This is not something that the Governing Body can give an opinion on.
<b>37.</b>	Presumably any action taken to change the school’s status will require consent at an extraordinary general meeting of St Georges School Harpenden Limited.	No. The decision rests entirely on the Governors of the school.
<b>38.</b>	My conclusion is that St Georges, in changing its status, may lose more than it gains: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There seems to be an element of doubt as to whether the School can retain the LA central spend equivalent portion of its budget.</li> <li>• With DfE funding demands could be imposed.</li> <li>• Continuation of funding for collaborative programs with partner schools could be uncertain.</li> <li>• Initially the creation of academies was conceived for the improvement of educational opportunity for the underprivileged. I feel there is no advantage to St George’s to make the change to Academy Status.</li> </ul>	In the current climate all funding is uncertain.  A good example of this is sixth form funding which is being reduced year on year over the next 3 years until 2014. At this point they are also considering a change in the way in which sixth form funding is allocated, which would in effect reduce the amount that school can receive yet again.
<b>39.</b>	Are there any downsides to freedoms from the LA?	This is too general a question to give a specific answer.

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<b>40.</b>	Does St George’s receive any practical help from LA which might be withdrawn if the school became an academy?	The LA has produced a range of “traded Services” this includes the majority of services that the LA provides. Those services which we feel are good value for money, and offer us a continuity of service that is useful for the school (e.g. Human Resources) could be purchased back. Parents must be aware however that a great many of these services are ALREADY traded
<b>41.</b>	Could it impact on the delivery of minor A levels for pupils of several neighbouring schools?	See question 27 and 38
<b>42.</b>	Who would bear the brunt of the changeover costs?	The Government have provided funds for this, over and above the normal school funding.
<b>43.</b>	Is there a risk of future government of a different political colour might not be so benign towards academies.	Yes.
<b>44.</b>	Might the change of status affect access to funds currently available, such as legacies?	No.
<b>45.</b>	I am very much in favour of the 70/20/10 approach to admissions and would not like to see this change as a result of the change of status.	The slow evolution of the school admissions criteria in response to local need and changes to the national admissions code is entirely independent of whether the school does or does not become an Academy.
<b>STAKEHOLDER QUESTIONS raised and answered at 6<sup>th</sup> October meeting</b>		<b>Answers</b>
<b>46.</b>	What types of schools are currently changing to academies – failing or outstanding?	More outstanding. A school has to be at least good before academy status is considered. Under the previous Government it was failing schools that converted. Failing Schools HAD to have a sponsor for conversion. This is not the case for outstanding and good schools.
<b>47.</b>	What changes legally?	There is a change in status. Currently the School has a Governing Body. An Academy is a limited company – an Academy Trust – and the Directors are the Governors of the school. At St Georges we currently have a Foundation – St George’s School Harpenden Limited – that is responsible for boarding, so the School is well

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		placed to make these changes.
<b>48.</b>	Will Directors have liabilities?	Directors of St Georges School Harpenden Limited already have liabilities. There will be no greater liability under academy status – and indeed the school is better placed to understand the liabilities given the existence of the Company.
<b>49.</b>	If things are not going to be different, why bother converting?	This is the reason for the consultation period – to determine whether the School would benefit from conversion.
<b>50.</b>	Has Academy Status made a difference to failing schools?	It is perceived that they have been successful. They say money has made a difference, as has greater freedom to spend the money the way they wish to.
<b>51.</b>	The £360k initial year funding – how do we know it will be available next year?	We do not know. Figures have not yet been published. Currently the money is sent direct to the LA. The LA retains a certain amount and the remainder is sent to schools. Under Academy 100% goes to the school. The School will continue to buy selected services from the LA., but it won't have to pay for what it is not using. The £365k may well reduce as Government funding is reducing, but this will happen irrespective of the school's status.
<b>52.</b>	Can the school decide not to opt for specialist support for individual students?	<p>The LA has already cut its workforce and services will change, irrespective of the school's status. An academy would look at services and students – and they may consider that an alternative provider may be the right solution. But cuts to County services could happen whether or not St George's converts to an Academy.</p> <p>Currently Educational Psychologist services are allocated to the school on a so many days per year basis and the School already has to make decisions to purchase extra service if required.</p>
<b>53.</b>	Can you give any examples of LA services that you were obliged to buy in the past that you would consider purchasing elsewhere?	Most LA services have been good and the school would continue to use them. But some services might be better sought elsewhere. As an example AST teachers could well give better

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		advice on their specialist subject than County staff as there knowledge is so detailed, so schools might be better to purchase time from each other. On the other hand NQT support is excellent and the school would wish to retain this.
<b>54.</b>	Could you therefore sell some of St George’s expert teacher advice to other schools?	Yes, but there has to be a proper balance. Schools will have to become more of a business.
<b>55.</b>	Concerns that as an Academy you are “on your own.”	The School already has the business acumen and can take advantage of the flexibility that academy funding provides.
<b>56.</b>	How would Ofsted see the change to academy?	The inspection would be unlikely to change. They will still inspect Teaching and Learning, management, examinations and behavioural issues. They might study the impact of academy status, but it should not change their overall inspection methods.
<b>57.</b>	If you are not able to fall back on the LA, who would offer support to the School?	Young People’s Learning Agency – YPLA – this has been set up to monitor academies. The 58 page self evaluation document still has to be completed.
<b>58.</b>	How will the change in status affect partnerships with other schools?	<p>We would strive to maintain links with primary schools. 5 AST’s currently visit schools in need – at the moment this is county funded. If County funding is removed, we would have to decide whether to fund ourselves or reconsider the commitment.</p> <p>The current £250k technology status and language outreach would no longer be ring fenced and it would be up to the school to decide how to allocate this work amongst schools.</p> <p>We would wish to retain good relationships with our local schools.</p> <p>There may be opportunities for schools to bargain collectively for services.</p>

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<b>59.</b>	What about specific needs of specific departments – such as the provision of interactive whiteboards?	Academy Status may give flexibility, but budget changes are happening irrespective of status. Difficult decisions may arise as a result of these budget changes: eg small teaching groups for languages. It is impossible to judge whether funding for specific improvements would be available. We want to maintain the excellent extra curricular activities. The school is fortunate to have an active PSA and the Cecil Grant Founders Trust to support the School; it has made a huge difference.
<b>60.</b>	RPS and SJL academies have connection with Rothamsted and the University of Herts – how does this work?	Sponsors are not involved in the day to day running of academies.
<b>61.</b>	What about the change in legal status with regard to the possibilities of lawsuits, maternity rights and redundancies?	There is no real change to current situation regarding liabilities. Redundancies have to be paid out of budgets. Maternity costs were paid by LA – would now be out of academy budget. Pensions are guaranteed and carried across to academy.
<b>62.</b>	Is it significant that the school has control of land?	St Georges Harpenden Limited owns the buildings. An Academy would lease this. There is currently a gentleman’s agreement with the LA regarding the land – the land would have to be leased from the LA.
<b>63.</b>	What about staff? Will they buy into the academy?	Staff are being consulted until 4 November. As T&Cs are not changing there was no legal obligation to consult for 28 days, the School felt they should do so. A meeting was held on 4 October with staff representatives and union representatives. Main concerns have been surrounding budgets.
<b>64.</b>	How will you make a decision?	The level of business acumen in the school and governing body is high. The School will look very carefully at the pros and cons. We are not rushing and will make the best decision for the school.
<b>65.</b>	Can you revert back to VA once you have committed to become an Academy?	No.
<b>66.</b>	Who makes the decisions about what services to purchase?	A mix of the person who asks the leadership group and

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		governors, depending on value for money and budget available.
<b>67.</b>	Post meeting question: At the meeting it was mentioned that £365k would be the school's income, with approx £150k to be spent on purchasing useful services. Can you surmise what the balance would be used for?	For the general benefit of the school.