



Head Teacher: Mrs SA Welsh  
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## ACADEMY CONSULTATION - Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

### 1. Why are Whinfield Primary School Governors and Leaders considering converting the School to an Academy?

There are a number of reasons why it is the right time to convert the School to an Academy. Significant evidence exists which shows the powerful impact of schools collaborating to form a strong group. This collaboration benefits both pupils and staff by offering wider opportunities and experiences, not only in teaching and learning but as a 'family of schools' to provide support and resilience.

Over the last few years almost all schools in Darlington have become academies, and this has given them greater say in how their budgets are spent and access to other academies for support or advice. Whinfield Primary School is now amongst a very small group of schools maintained by Darlington Borough Council and, now that the Academy system has matured, it feels the right time to convert and join a Trust that shares our values and vision for the future.

### 2. Are there other options to becoming an academy and joining The Education Village Academy Trust (EVAT)?

The School could continue to be maintained by the Local Authority, but this would be a short-term option. Like most authorities Darlington Borough Council is facing funding constraints and so encouraging its remaining schools to become academies. All Darlington Secondary Schools are now Academies and only three Primary schools remain under Local Authority control. This reduction has understandably made it difficult for the Council to continue to offer the range of services to schools it used to.

The Governing Body considered other Trust's too but concluded EVAT best matched Whinfield's ethos and values, and its close location would make working together very straightforward. EVAT is one of the longest established Trusts locally and has the depth of experience and capacity to help Whinfield become an Academy, and to support us going forward.

### 3. Do parents or carers need to take any action to ensure their child remains a Whinfield pupil?

No. All existing pupils would automatically move to be part of the new Academy. In line with academies already in the Trust, we do not anticipate any changes to admission arrangements (e.g. catchment or priority criteria) in the future.



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4. How would pupils with special educational needs (SEN) be catered for and can you give an assurance that current levels of support would be maintained?

The school is not seeking to change the way SEN students are supported as a result of academy conversion. EVAT has significant experience in supporting pupils with SEN.

5. What effect might Academy status have on the curriculum?

No detrimental effect. The school will continue to offer a broad-based curriculum defined by quality and the best interests of the children. The school values the importance of the National Curriculum and will continue to follow it closely to support all pupils to achieve their full potential

6. As an Academy would the School retain its existing policies?

The school would adopt EVAT's policies. Although these will not be identical, the laws and procedures that underpin the policies will be similar so parents/carers and staff should not see a significant difference. A benefit of joining an existing Trust is that policies are harmonised and the task of developing and maintaining them is shared, removing a significant burden experienced by standalone schools.

7. Would children and parents/carers see a difference in the School if it became an Academy?

It's unlikely it would feel or look any different to parents/carers and pupils. Parents/carers may start to see the Trust logo on communications for example, but the building and staff will be the same. There is no intention to change the uniform or the start and end times each day. The name of the School may change to Whinfield Primary Academy or Whinfield Academy but that will be decided later if a move to Academy status is agreed.

8. How will parents/carers and stakeholders views be taken into account when a decision is made?

Mainly through responses to the consultation. Although the consultation will end formally on 17 April, views can be submitted at any time and would be taken into consideration by the Governing Body.

The decision to proceed to academy status will be defined by the potential advantages to our pupils and careful consideration of any disadvantages.

9. What are the benefits for my child if the school joins EVAT?

The pupils of Whinfield and all other EVAT academies will benefit from strengthened links with other schools, whilst the distinctiveness of each is protected. The Trust maintains a strong focus on driving up educational standards, a clear emphasis on achievement for all, shared expertise and greater opportunities for pupils.



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10. Who makes the decisions in each school?

The Headteacher would be responsible for the day-to-day business of the school, as now. The Governing Body will continue to exist but with slightly different delegated powers. A single board of Trustees would sit above the Governing Body.

11. Would parents/carers and staff still be included on the Governing Body?

Yes. Each academy in the Trust has parent/carers and staff Governors, elected by their peers.

12. How would the School be funded?

At the moment, the school receives funding from Government via Darlington Borough Council. This would change and the Trust would receive funding direct from Government to pass on to the School.

13. If the conversion goes ahead, when is it likely to happen?

If approved it is anticipated the School would become an Academy and join EVAT on 1 September 2023.



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