



WESTGATE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Proposal to convert to Academy status in April 2016

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is an Academy?

A: Academies are designed to be high performing schools designed to meet the needs of the 21st Century. They are an integral aspect of the Government's strategy to raise education standards in all areas and aim to achieve this through innovative approaches to management, governance, teaching and learning and curriculum delivery.

They are non-fee paying schools and independent of the Local Authority, but publicly funded by the Government and inspected by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED). Every academy is required to be part of an academy trust which is an exempt charity and company limited by guarantee. Schools that are judged either 'good' or 'outstanding' can choose to convert to become an academy. Schools in Ofsted categories – where provision is not up to required standards – convert to academy status by being sponsored by an academy trust. This is important in order to ensure each sponsored school makes the necessary improvements.

Academies receive funding directly from the government as opposed to the local authority (LA). This means that academies have greater control of their budgets, allowing them to target funding where it is most needed to ensure that it best meets the needs of pupils.

Q: Why is Westgate Primary School converting to an Academy?

A: Becoming an academy provides greater freedom and flexibility to headteachers and teachers, promotes innovation and diversity in the school system, and so helps to raise educational standards across the board. Westgate Primary School is on an improving journey since being rated 'inadequate' and placed in special measures by Ofsted in 2013. The school was inspected again in 2015 and although improvements had been made, Ofsted judged the school to be 'requires improvement'.

Westgate Primary School has been working in partnership with Manor Community Primary School since December 2013 and has benefited from the high quality education and leadership support provided by Manor Community Primary School. Having focused on building the capacity within Westgate to provide high quality teaching and learning over the last two years, Westgate is ready to move to academy status and continue to be supported by Manor as part of the Cygnus Academies Trust, a new Multi Academy Trust that is being established.

Curriculum development will continue as an academy, giving pupils of all abilities experiences which will prepare them exceptionally well for the next stage in their education and the world of work beyond.

Q: Will Westgate Primary School be the only school in the Trust?

A: The Governors believe that working in partnership with other schools is extremely important. Westgate will become part of a Multi Academy Trust – Cygnus Academies Trust – which is in



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the process of being established. The Trust's ambition is for other schools to join the Trust in the future in addition to Manor Community Primary School and Westgate Primary School and share good practice and learn from high performing schools. Manor Community Primary School's Executive Headteacher is a Local Leader of Education and holds the professional qualification for school inspection and has taken a lead role in the support and development of Westgate Primary.

Q: When will the Academy open?

A: The intention is for the school to convert to become an Academy on 1st April 2016.

Q: How will the Academy's governing body ensure democratic representation?

A: Cygnus Academies Trust will be a Charitable Trust, registered with Companies House and the Charities Commission, and therefore subject to specific legal guidelines. The Cygnus Academies Trust will establish a Local Governing Body for Westgate Primary School with governors representative of the school and the community. The Local Governing Body will work with the school to continue to improve teaching and learning and will be responsible to the Trust Board which will oversee performance across all of the academies within the Trust.

Ultimately, Cygnus Academies Trust will be accountable to the students, parents and communities for its academies and will act in the best interests of the schools. It will also be accountable to the Department for Education (DfE). Parents and staff will be represented on Westgate's Local Governing Body who will be elected by the school's parent and staff communities.

Q: How will the Academy involve parents?

A: Westgate has an active Parent Teacher Association and is keen to ensure the continued involvement of parents in the life of the school. Westgate remains open to suggestions on how best to broaden parental involvement. Simply put, the Academy will, as now, wish parents to become more engaged with their children's school in order for greater benefits to be realised for all concerned.

Q: What assurances will the Academy give to guarantee the terms and conditions of the teaching and support staff?

A: Westgate Primary School and Cygnus Academies Trust recognise that being a good employer is key to attracting and retaining high quality teachers and support staff and will be very strong and supportive on performance. The Trust and the School are conscious of the need to retain and recruit outstanding staff so it would not be in the School's interest to undercut national and local norms.

Q: How will pupil admissions be arranged?

A: No changes are planned and the process for applying remains the same. Children have to apply for a place in an academy, in the same way that they do for any other state school. Admissions are fair, and must be in accordance with the School Admissions Code. Westgate



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will continue to be a school for the local community. The planned admissions policy matches the previous school policy that is mirrored widely across Kent schools.

Q: What will the age range be at the Academy?

A: The Academy will maintain the current intake of 4 to 11 year olds, with a maximum intake of 30 pupils each year, making a total of 210 pupils in the school.

Q: How will the Academy project be funded?

A: Conversion to Academy status will be funded through a grant from the Department for Education and will be separate to funding received for pupil teaching and learning purposes.

Q: Do Academies publish information about their performance?

Although Academies have greater freedoms than other schools, they cannot hide what they do and how they operate. Academies are also inspected by OFSTED, and their exam results are published in exactly the same way as all other state schools. The Government also publishes other information about Academies, including expressions of interest from Academy sponsors, funding agreements and attendance figures.

Q: When will public consultation take place?

The formal consultation process will take place between Monday 7th December 2015 and Friday 29th January 2016.

- Consultation leaflets will be emailed and distributed to students, parents/carers, staff, other local schools, local community groups, faith groups, local Councillors, local MPs, resident associations, youth groups, voluntary organisations, local police and the local libraries.
- There will be three means of submitting feedback:
 - via tear-off postal slip in Consultation Leaflets
 - via the Academy's website
 - via voicing of opinions at public events (listed below)

All the information contained within the consultation document will be made available on the Academy's website: www.westgateprimary.org

- This 'Frequently Asked Questions' document is also available on the website.
- A community meeting for parents and the local community to find out more about the Academy proposal, will be held at Westgate Primary School on **Wednesday 13th January 2016 from 6:00pm to 7:30pm in the school hall**



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- A staff meeting to find out more about the Academy proposal will be held at Westgate Primary School on **Wednesday 13th January 2016 from 3.30pm to 4:30pm in the school hall**
- A “drop-in” session to find out more about the Academy proposal will be held at Westgate Primary School on **Thursday 21st January 2016 from 2:30pm to 6:30pm in the school hall**
- The Academy project will continue to publish updates on the progress of the Academy proposals on the school’s website: www.westgateprimary.org

For more information on the project and how you can make your views known please contact the school by telephoning **01322 223382** or e-mailing academisation@westgate.kent.sch.uk