

FAQs

- **What is an academy?**

An academy is a state-funded school which is run by a trust rather than the local council. It receives funding directly from the Education Funding Agency rather than through Surrey or Hampshire County Council.

- **What is the Good Shepherd Trust?**

The Good Shepherd Trust (GST) is a multi-academy trust set up by the Diocese of Guildford to lead and support church school academies across the diocese. It currently has six primary schools, one junior school and one secondary school.

- **Who is responsible for managing an academy?**

In The Good Shepherd Trust, each school retains its own Head Teacher and Local Governing Body. In most schools, in order to ensure continuity of leadership as the school converts to academy status, there is little change in personnel. Where schools join The Trust as sponsored academies, it is likely that new governors will need to be recruited. Local Governing Bodies have oversight of the quality of provision in the school, and will hold schools to account through supportive challenge. They are also the first port of call for any complaints from parents or the community. The Trust Board of Directors has a statutory duty to ensure all schools in the Trust deliver a good education and provide value for money. Two Chairs of Local Governing Bodies are Directors of the Board.

- **Who decides on the academy curriculum?**

The curriculum is decided by the school in collaboration with the Board of Directors. All children and young people are assessed in the same way as pupils in local authority schools, so much of the curriculum is the same. There are some flexibilities to tailor the curriculum to the needs of the children in the school. For example, a school situated near Hampton Court might focus a good deal of its history on Hampton Court, whilst ensuring that other aspects of history are covered.

- **Are there still parent governors? Are academies transparent and subject to external scrutiny?**

In the Good Shepherd Trust schools, parent members of the local governing body are elected in exactly the same way as previously.

All academies are subject to external scrutiny from Ofsted, the Department for Education and the Regional Schools' Commissioner. All monitoring is reported to parents/carers and to the general public.

- **How can I apply for a place for my child in an academy? What are the admission criteria?**

Parents and carers apply for a place in an academy in exactly the same way as they would apply for a place in a local authority school. The admissions criteria are published for each school and must follow the 'admissions code' which is set nationally.

- **If my child does not get a place at an academy, what rights of appeal do I have?**

You have the same rights of appeal as in any other school. Each academy must publish its appeal process, which must be followed.

- **If my child attends an academy and I am not happy with a decision what is the complaints procedure?**

All schools in the trust have a dedicated headteacher and they would always be the first person to approach. If necessary the complaint would then go to the Local Governing Body and, if it cannot be resolved, it would then go to the trust board to determine.

- **What is the 'Christian ethos'?**

Christian ethos is quite difficult to define, but can be summarised as *'The school aims to serve its community by providing an education of the highest quality within the context of Christian belief and practice. It encourages an understanding of the meaning and significance of faith, and promotes Christian values through the experience it offers to all its pupils'*.

- **How is Christian distinctiveness ensured at an academy?**

If the academy has a Church school foundation, it will have a 'Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools' (SIAMS) at least every five years. This report is published to parents and carers and to the general public and provides a regular check on a school's distinctively Christian nature.

The Good Shepherd Trust welcome interest from any local school. If a community school wished to join the Trust, it would need to demonstrate that its values and ethos supported and reflected the Christian values of The Trust.

- **Do academies follow usual school terms?**

Academies do not have to follow usual school terms, but they often do. This is because academies recognise that they do not operate in isolation. Every academy is part of the wider school community and recognise that parents will frequently have children at more than one school.

- **Do academies accept children from all faiths and no faith?**

All academies have to be inclusive, and for academies in diocesan academy trusts this is very important. All schools in The Good Shepherd Trust accept children of all faiths or no faith.

- **How are academies financed?**

All academies are funded directly from the Education Funding Agency. This funding is the same as the academy would receive if it was still a local authority school.

- **What is the employment process for teaching staff at an academy?**

Many academies, including the Good Shepherd Trust, have exactly the same employment processes for their staff as a local authority would. Safe recruitment practices are followed and teachers have the same conditions of service.

- **If in transition to become an academy, mid school year, how long does the process take?**

The transition from a local authority school to an academy usually takes about six months. Sometimes it can take slightly longer - especially where there are issues over landownership - and sometimes slightly less.

- **If I am a parent of a student at a school in transition from LEA to academy, how will my child be affected?**

Your children should not be affected by the transition. In many cases, the children do not notice the transition at all.

- **Who decides if a school is to become an academy? Are parents consulted or kept informed of the process?**

If a school is inspected and it is found to be inadequate, then the Department for Education will decide that the school must become an academy. A sponsor will be found and that school will convert as soon as is possible.

For most schools, the choice to convert lies with the Governing Body who pass a resolution to convert. The parents and carers are consulted prior to any conversion.

- **How are parents kept informed of this process?**

Parents are consulted when their children's school proposes to become an academy. They will be informed by the school itself through newsletters and on their website as the process progresses.

- **Will my child be able to gain the same qualifications at an academy as at a local authority run school?**

Yes. The qualifications are part of a national system and are the same.

- **Are academies subject to Ofsted reports?**

Yes. All state schools, whether academies or Local Authority schools are subject to Ofsted inspection.

- **What does a Good Shepherd Trust academy offer that other academies don't have? How does a parent tell the difference?**

The Good Shepherd Trust takes pride in the individual, unique character of each school within the trust. Many other academy Trusts have a more corporate approach, with all schools sharing the same uniform, name and, in some cases, policies. So, whilst The Trust has very high expectations for the best possible pupil outcomes for all the children attending trust schools, parents and children will recognise that their school will not change in its ethos or values, nor will it change its name or uniform.

- **What evidence is there that the Good Shepherd Trust is helping schools to flourish?**

The outcomes for children and young people in Good Shepherd Trust schools are higher than both the national and local authority averages.

Outcomes for pupils attending schools within the Trust in 2015 placed their schools 17th out of 218 academy trusts and local authorities. Unvalidated data for Key Stage Two assessments for 2016 show that 61.5% of children achieved the required standard in reading, writing and mathematics, compared with the national average of 53%.

Recent monitoring reports posted on both the schools' and the trust's websites demonstrate the improvements achieved.

- **LEA's have a wealth of experience and manpower in managing schools. Is a diocese up to the task?**

Church of England has a very long history of running and supporting schools, and so the Diocese has a well-established infra-structure already in place that currently works in partnership with the LA> This Diocesan infra-structure remains in place when a school converts to academy status and joins The Good Shepherd Trust. Member schools will still draw on the support of a range of LA services such as Safeguarding services, and will be able to purchase others, such as learning support.