

Ashbrook and Holmwood School's Academy Conversion Consultation

Frequently Asked Questions

What is an Academy?

Academies are independent, state-funded schools, which receive their funding directly from central government, rather than through a local authority.

The day-to-day running of the school is with the Head teacher, but they are overseen by individual charitable bodies called Academy Trusts and may be part of an Academy Trust of schools.

These trusts and chains provide advice, support, expertise and a strategic overview.

What is a Multi- Academy Trust (MAT)?

A multi-academy trust (MAT) is a single entity established to undertake a strategic collaboration to improve and maintain high educational standards across several schools. A group of schools form a single MAT which has overarching responsibility for their governance.

The MAT is accountable for the performance of each school in the group, although each can still have their own governing body which operates subject to delegation of power from the MAT.

Are you setting up a new MAT or joining an existing one?

We are seeking to join an existing MAT called Inspiring Futures through Learning (IFtL). Our school already knows the schools within the trust well, we have worked with them on previous projects, and most importantly share the same values, vision, ethos and commitment to be the very best that we can be.

Are academies all about improving failing schools?

They were once. The policy, which originated under Labour, aimed to improve struggling schools, primarily in deprived areas and this continues under the sponsored-academy model, where failing schools are taken over and run by an academy trust.

But it has changed radically to embrace all types of schools, successful or otherwise.

All schools, primary as well as secondary have been invited to convert to academy status.

Who oversees academies?

Academies, like all schools, are inspected by Ofsted.

Regional School Commissioners were introduced in 2014 to approve academy conversions and monitor standards at academies and free schools in their area.

When was IFtL established?

IFtL was established in 2016, founded by educationalists from the Ofsted ranked 'Outstanding' Two Mile Ash Schools, 'Outstanding' Initial Teacher Training Partnership and Milton Keynes Teaching School Alliance. The same year IFtL was awarded Sponsorship Status of two brand new schools in the Western Expansion Area; Whitehouse Primary School (opened September 2016) and Fairfield's Primary School (opened September 2017). In 2016/17 three further schools chose to join the Trust, Chestnuts Primary School, Olney Infant Academy and Olney Middle Schools. The schools had been working together before this point.

Why join IFtL rather than another MAT?

The Governing Body have spent the last 12 months researching MAT's and investigating all options available. The key deciding factor for Ashbrook and Holmwood is to join a MAT who has a similar shared goal for educational excellence, along with a shared mission, vision and values. This has been identified in IFtL

Joining a trust of schools brings significant benefits including, but not limited to:

- Opportunities for collaboration, sharing of skills, expertise and best practice.
- Trust wide network groups
- Progression and development opportunities
- Centralised support, expertise and guidance
- Centralises purchasing and cost savings

Will you still be assessed by OFSTED as an academy?

Yes. Academies are subject to the same inspection process as maintained* schools.

*maintained schools are schools maintained by the Local Authority

If our school becomes an academy, how will this affect the governing body structure?

The principles and expectations of governance are the same in academies as in maintained schools.

Each school will continue to have local governing body representation which operates in line with the Scheme of delegation.

Are employees happy about this proposal? Will there be any changes to the terms and conditions for employees?

Employees are being formally consulted about the proposal. The terms and conditions for all current employees at Ashbrook and Holmwood will remain the same and will be TUPE'd to IFtL. Employees will be able to access additional benefits including an enhanced employee benefits package and in house CPD provision through Milton Keynes Teaching School Alliance.

Will there be any job losses?

There will be no job losses as a result of the schools joining IFtL.

What opportunities are there for staff?

Staff will have the opportunity to collaborate with likeminded colleagues across the trust through a variety of routes, including but not limited to, subject network groups, cross trust moderation and CPD. Staff will be able to access a wider range of progression opportunities and the opportunity to progress and develop their career within IFtL.

Will staff be forced to move and work at other schools?

No member of staff will be moved or forced to work at another school. Unless they wish to do so.

Is there a financial cost to the school converting to become an academy?

Ashbrook and Holmwood have applied for a £25,000 government grant to help with any costs linked to the conversion, such as legal fees. We don't anticipate any financial costs beyond that funded by the grant.

Are any changes to the admission arrangements anticipated?

There will be no changes to the admission arrangements as we will adhere to the same criteria used at present regardless of whether schools are under local authority control or members of a Multi-Academy Trust.

Will the school uniform's change?

There are no plans to change the uniforms.

Is it the school Governors who make the final decision on becoming an academy?

There is a full consultation with the school community, unions and other stakeholders in which all opinions, concerns and questions will be heard and taken into consideration. Ultimately the Governing Body will then make the final decision. The Governing Body consists of representatives of parents, staff, and the local community.

What happens if the Governors don't agree?

A vote will be held by the Governing Body with a majority decision carried. Governors have been researching and discussing various options over the last eighteen months.

What would be the working relationship with the other schools?

Ashbrook and Holmwood would each be an equal member and would have representation at various levels of the MAT structure.

Is there anything that you must change to become part of IFtL? E.g. operationally?

We are committed to ensuring that parents and pupils will not notice any operational differences day to day. One of the key reasons for becoming an academy is the benefits of being part of a larger family of schools and working closely with trust schools and a teaching school, sharing resources and cost savings through purchasing as part of a group. The school would therefore adapt its administration to respond to the different ways that academies are funded and held accountable.

What are the risks of becoming an academy?

The Governors have looked and continue to look very closely at the risks and opportunities associated with becoming an academy and believe the benefits of joining Inspiring Futures through Learning significantly outweigh any risks. The Government has encouraged all primary schools to convert to academy status by 2020.

Who are IFtL accountable to?

IFtL are directly accountable to the Department for Education (DfE) in the same way that other Multi Academy Trusts and sponsors are. The schools remain accountable to OFSTED.

Are the results e.g. SATS presented as a trust or as individual schools – do you get your own individual OFSTED rating?

All SATs results, OFSTED reports and league table information will be presented as an individual school in the same way it is at present.

Is there a maximum number of schools that can be in a trust?

There is no published maximum figure although all schools that join new sponsors or MATs must be approved by the DfE and can trusts can be stopped from taking on too many schools.

Is IFtL wanting to expand further?

IFtL may take on additional schools in the future but there are no firm plans as to numbers. IFtL's position is that they do not intend to become a large group and want to focus on delivering quality of teaching across their schools.

Is it inevitable that Ashbrook and Holmwood would have to become an academy at some point?

We believe so. All political parties are committed to continuing the academy programme.