

Some questions to consider if you are thinking of converting to academy status

Questionnaire

This questionnaire has been developed to assist you in preparing for possible conversion to academy status.

The school should where possible seek to provide full answers to the various questions below as the answers will provide a good factual matrix against which the governors can consider the rationale behind converting to academy status.

We appreciate that some of the questions will be relatively straightforward to answer but some will require a considerable amount of research. We therefore suggest that the school engages as early as possible with the need to pull together the necessary information to answer the questions set out in this questionnaire.

1 Finance

1.1 financial management

Who performs the financial management role at the school; what are their qualifications, skills and experience and what level of support are they provided with and by whom.

1.2 accounting system

How are accounting services provided; in house team or outsourced to the local authority / commercial service provider.

If services are provided in-house:

- who manages the accounting function at the School; what are their qualifications, skills and experience and what level of support are they provided with and by whom
- which accounting system is in use

If the service is outsourced:

- who is this to
- what is the value and remaining length of any unexpired contract term
- what level of service is provided by the outsourced provider
- is there an SLA in place and is performance against this formally monitored
- what is the outcome

1.3 payroll

How are payroll services provided; in house payroll team or outsourced to the local authority / commercial service provider.

If the service is provided in-house:

- who manages the payroll function at the school; what are their qualifications, skills and experience and what level of support are they provided with and by whom
- which payroll system is in use

If the service is outsourced:

- who is this to
- what is the value remaining length of any unexpired contract term
- what level of service is provided by the outsourced provider
- payroll processing / production of payslips
- full bureau service
- pensions management and actuarial services
- is there an SLA in place and is performance against this formally monitored
- what is the outcome

1.4 banking services

How are banking services provided; does the school operate its own business bank account(s) or are services outsourced to the local authority.

If the school operates its own business bank account(s):

- which banks are accounts held with
- who manages the banking function at the School; what are their skills and experience and what level of support are they provided with
- are electronic/on-line services used
- are there any loan and/or overdraft facilities in place

1.5 general annual grant

1.51 Have you consulted the ready reckoner on the DfE site to ascertain what the likely level of your general annual grant will be?

1.5.2 Have you spoken to the YPLA in relation to their assessment of the level of funding which you are likely to receive under the general annual grant?

1.5.3 How are you going to provide the various services currently provided by the local authority out of your general annual grant? These services include:

- school action/school action plus
- education welfare service
- behaviour support
- educational psychology services
- financial services - support for the statutory requirements and general support for financial reporting, financial guidance/information, training for relevant staff on financial procedures, benchmarking, annual budget setting, multi-year budget planning, year-end forecasting
- employee services - fully managed payroll system, pensions management, HR function, general support relating to personnel/payroll administration in Schools, all year end procedures, criminal record check
- health & safety - comprehensive support and guidance, audit processes, visits relating to guidance, monitoring, accident investigation and enforcement action, RIDDOR investigations, key issues support (e.g. asbestos, legionella, fire management), environmental monitoring, CLEAPSS, together with ad hoc support in relation to risk assessments
- HR legal - grievances, discipline, capability etc. and maternity/paternity
- occupational health - broad support service relating to such issues as unnecessary sickness, DDA, H&S legislation compliance, back to work processes, pre-employment health assessments, health surveillance and staff absence protection
- ICT services - financial data access and storage, SIMS (including licenses), admin/office network support, security updates;
- governor training - annual training programme including national induction programmes and support for training co-ordinators
- governor clerking services
- school improvement services - ad hoc support service for such matters capability processes, advisory input

- school librarian support
- asset management - in addition to items included in central costs above, such items as tree management, P.E. equipment replacement, lifting equipment, disabled access equipment and extract testing are all centrally funded. Landscape and grounds maintenance, gas servicing and fire alarm testing are procured/carried out by the school from funding allocated to the school budget, as is school cleaning (contract plus cleaner in charge), advisory reports compliance services in relation to energy certificates
- catering
- music services
- legal services
- insurance - insurance to cover fire, terrorism, public liability, employer's liability, officials indemnity, professional negligence, libel and slander, fidelity guarantee, engineering inspection, duty personal accident, cash and school funds, glass, travel to cover staff and pupils off site, standard mini buses, excess charge per claim

1.5.4 Have the school assessed the cost of providing these services and obtained costs estimates for those it intends to employ to provide those services post conversion?

1.5.5 Has the school considered buying back these services from the local authority under an SLA Agreement?

1.5.6 Are there any other reasons why the level of funding to the school may change i.e. a drop in pupil numbers?

1.5.7 Has the school identified those who are part of the local government pension scheme?

1.5.8 Have you obtained an estimate of the deficit from the scheme administrator?

1.5.9 Have you considered what the impact is going to be on the academy of having to make good that deficit over a 28 year period generally through increased employer contributions?

2 Plant

2.1 Have you obtained a copy of the report prepared for your insurers in relation to the condition of the plant and equipment?

2.2 Have you obtained a report from the local authority in relation to planned maintenance and whether a planned maintenance programme is being delivered?

2.3 Are you aware of any defects in plant and equipment which will lead to significant expenditure?

3 Properties

- 3.1 Please supply a plan showing the extent of the land occupied by the school that sufficiently identifies the property in relation to other recognisable land features.
- 3.2 Please confirm whether all necessary planning and other consents have been obtained in respect of such properties and their current use and supply copies of all consents.
- 3.3 Please confirm who are the current owners of the property occupied by the school.
- 3.4 Have you obtained a copy of the plan prepared for your insurers relating to the condition of the buildings on the school site?
- 3.5 Have you obtained a report from the local authority in relation to planned maintenance and whether the planned maintenance programme is being delivered?
- 3.6 Please provide a copy of all valuation reports in relation to the school premises.
- 3.7 Please provide details of any rights which exist over the property or rights which are used to benefit the property.
- 3.8 Please confirm whether or not there have been any disputes relating to the property.
- 3.9 Please confirm that the property directly abuts onto a publicly adopted highway and there have been no issues with access to the school site.

4 Intellectual property

- 4.1 Please identify details of all trade marks, trade names, service marks, patents, registered designs, design rights, copyright, know-how and other intellectual property owned or used by the seller in connection with the business.
- 4.2 Please supply copies of all registration certificates, specifications and all other documents evidencing such intellectual property. Please also supply copies of all agreements relating to the licensing or use of such intellectual property both to and by the seller.
- 4.3 Please provide full details of the computer systems used by the business, including details as to ownership of hardware and software and provide copies of all relevant maintenance agreements.

5 Employees

- 5.1 Have you a full list detailing the names, job titles, ages, and date of commencement of employment of all employees who will be employed in the School following conversion?
- 5.2 have you copies of all current written service agreements, contracts of employment, terms and conditions of employment, letters of appointment (where such apply as terms and conditions of employment) and letters varying terms of employment including the most recent salary/wages notification in respect of each employee referred to.
- 5.3 Do you hold copies of all current employee handbook(s), to include disciplinary and grievance policies and procedures, equal opportunities policy, flexible working policies, sickness policies and procedures and any other applicable work rules, policies and procedures, whether or not contractually binding, applicable to the employees?
- 5.4 What approach are you going to take to salary reviews following conversion?
- 5.5 Please confirm that the Business complies with the requirements of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 and the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006 and provide details of the procedures implemented to ensure compliance.
- 5.6 Are any of the employees currently on or will they, so far as you are aware, be taking maternity leave within the next six months? Are there any employees absent on long term sick leave?
- 5.7 Are there any flexible arrangements enjoyed by the employees such as job share arrangements, flexitime arrangements or early retirement schemes? If so, please supply details.
- 5.8 Are there any schemes or programmes for the employment or training for workers in the School?
- 5.9 How is holiday entitlement for part-time workers calculated?
- 5.10 Have you copies of any written collective or workforce agreements with trade unions or employee associations or bodies or employee representatives by which employees are represented?
- 5.11 Have you details of all “unwritten” agreements or understandings with trade unions or employee associations or bodies by which employees are represented?
- 5.12 Have you details of any current position in relation to any disciplinary, dismissal or grievance procedures currently in progress?
- 5.13 Do you have details of all dismissals for redundancy or otherwise or resignations within the last 12 months?

- 5.14 Are there any outstanding or anticipated claims to employment tribunals, county or high courts or other industrial disputes, relating to current or former employees, if so do you have full details?
- 5.15 Please supply a copy of the relevant equal opportunity/policy/policies and details of any Commission for Racial Equality or Equal Opportunity Commission investigations carried out, any non-discrimination notices issued or job evaluation studies carried out within the last 5 years.
- 5.16 Please supply details of any applications made to and any orders or declarations of the Central Arbitration Committee in the last 36 months.
- 5.17 Please supply details of any employee request for or any employee notification of information and consultation arrangements made in the last 36 months, including details of the current position in respect of such requests or notification.

6 Health and safety

- 6.1 Have you a copy of the health and safety policy and details of any health and safety committees/employee representative bodies set up for such purpose?
- 6.2 Have there been any health and safety complaints, recommendations or claims over the last 5 years? If so, do you have full details?
- 6.3 Have you details of any action or notice issued in relation to the school by the Health and Safety Executive or any local authority relating to health and safety?
- 6.4 Have you copies of all current risk assessments?

7 Insurance

- 7.1 How is the school intending to obtain insurance cover following conversion?
- 7.2 Are there any insurance claims outstanding and unsettled?
- 7.3 Have you details of any current insurance claims?

8 Contracts and general business matters

- 8.1 Please prepare a schedule of all contracts the school is party to as this will be required for the asset transfer agreement if the school converts.

- please identify any contracts which are not transferable or which require consent to transfer (e.g. computer licences, construction documentation)

8.2 Please confirm that all payments under the agreements referred to in questions 8.1 are up to date and that all the terms of such agreements have been observed.

8.3 Have you copies of all licences or consents necessary to carry on the business?

9 Disputes

9.1 Have you details in relation to the school of any of the following which are current, pending or threatened litigation or which are known to be possible:

- litigation or arbitration proceedings (whether as claimant or defendant)
- proceedings relating to prosecution
- investigation by a governmental body
- employment tribunal claim or dispute
- applications to the Central Arbitration Committee
- any other legal process

9.2 Please supply details of any known failure by the seller to comply with any relevant statutory requirements in relation to the school.

10 Effect of the proposed agreement

Please supply details, including any copy documents, of any contracts or other arrangements relating to the School which could or will be terminated or varied as a result of the conversion of the school to academy status.

11 Trust funds

11.1 Does the school have a trust fund?

11.2 Do the objects of the trust fund allow the academy to benefit from the fund following conversion?

Contact us

To discuss your requirements further, please do not hesitate to contact us:

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