

## FAQs about Academisation

### What evidence is there that joining Nexus would improve outcomes for our students?

The Trust has amassed extensive experience over the past 8 years in supporting special schools to improve whilst at the same time growing in a planned and supported way to meet the needs of more and more children and young people being placed in the special school system.

Ofsted grades are not the be-all-and-end-all, but it's helpful to understand the picture across schools in Nexus. Becton is our only school where we have seen a changed Ofsted grade that wasn't an improvement, from Outstanding to Good. The "Good" grade was secured by a school that had experienced significant change since its last inspection (prior to joining Nexus as well as since), a significant diversification of its pupil cohort, and a different Ofsted framework. To maintain securely Good provision, with some Outstanding elements, in those challenging circumstances, whilst working hard to meet urgent pupil need, was the right outcome for the school and the Trust.

All of our other schools have either improved in their Ofsted grade or maintained a Good judgement, since being with the Trust. Good is not static, and requires a school to be continually improving. These judgments are directly linked to the quality of provision and pupil outcomes.

We have very low levels of parental complaints, and none that have been referred to the ESFA (which is the route a complainant can go down if they are dissatisfied with the Trust response). This tells us families are happy with the offer in our schools and the outcomes we achieve for their children.

We have schools that have financial health despite the challenging environment we operate in, with growing job opportunities across almost all of our academies and no wide scale compulsory redundancies ever implemented (though some individual posts have been restructured by school leaders – this is very low and atypical). Pupils therefore have consistency of staff throughout their journeys with us.

We have high levels of retention and satisfaction across our workforce, as is reflected in the Workforce Engagement Statements we choose to publish annually. We believe happiness is at the heart of a positive learning environment, and happy staff usually breeds happy learners.

Our Pupil Cabinet – which has membership representative of all our schools – actively engages in planning whole school and cross-Trust events to broaden and enrich their learning experiences.

Our Staff Parliament – which includes all teacher and support staff governors from across our schools – is also a key forum giving platform for wellbeing strategies to be agreed and workforce voice to be heard.

We have invested millions of pounds into our schools estate to improve it and to ensure it is fit for purpose for 21<sup>st</sup> century learning, working closely with local authorities to ensure the demand for growth is invested in fairly. This in turn better prepares our pupils for life after school, in better learning environments.

All of these aspects can be discussed when school union reps visit our schools, as has been arranged.

Fundamentally, our outcome tracking data for our pupils shows 100% of them having positive transitions when they leave us and a high % of these transitions being sustained. This is a credit to the hard work of our schools, which all exist in the enabling and supportive infrastructure of the Trust.

## Our curriculum requires development to support teachers, how can Nexus support this and will the curriculum be more student focused?

We have a range of strong practitioners across our Trust – and strong connections with other agencies, such as Learn Sheffield, the Education Endowment Foundation and university partners – to provide tailored support for the school to help curriculum development. We run network groups for all main curriculum areas, to bring curriculum leads together for professional discourse and to share learning and good practice. However, ultimately it will be Bents Green leaders who develop the curriculum based on your own school needs, with our support as you define and ask for it. Anything else would erode the school’s autonomy.

## How is transport for the students funded – would this be an additional cost and would that change in terms of how they are brought in?

It is funded in exactly the same way and remains a statutory duty of the local authority.

## What does “conversion” mean?

When a school becomes an academy the process is often called “conversion”. This describes the change in legal status from a “maintained” school (one maintained by the local authority) to an academy.

## Previous FAQ’s

### How does the process of academy conversion work? Who decides?

As a ‘Good’ school, the Bents Green School Board of Governors is responsible for determining whether to convert, when, and who with.

We, the Governing Body, believe it is in the school’s best interests to academise. On the basis of our due diligence work over the last 18 months we have chosen Nexus Multi Academy Trust (MAT) as the best option for Bents Green.

We are consulting now on this change. Following consultation – if the Governing Body wish to proceed – then they would then apply to the Department for Education who would decide whether to approve the application for Bents Green to join Nexus MAT.

If approved, the process itself can then take around 6 months before the school becomes an academy.

If at any point during this period we believe there is a legitimate reason to review the decision to academise or join Nexus MAT, then the process can be paused, or it can stop.

## What will change for our students?

Nothing would change simply by virtue of being an academy. We believe that the support on offer from Nexus MAT – and the strength and diversity of their schools - means that over time we will see improvements greater than we can achieve on our own. Part of our due diligence has been around the extent to which multi-academy trusts dictate changes to their schools. We know that Nexus MAT do not operate in that way, which is one of the key reasons we believe they are the right MAT for Bents Green.

Nexus MAT has no blanket policies that would change practice at Bents Green, unless governors and leaders wanted to implement change.

## Will the school's name change?

Not unless we, as a school community, want it to.

## Will the school uniform change?

Not unless we, as a school community, want it to.

## Will the school day or term change?

Not unless we, as a school community, want it to.

## Would our admissions change?

No. All our students are placed by local authorities through the EHCP process, this is the same for special schools that are academies.

By virtue of being part of Nexus MAT, however, we would sit alongside the other Nexus MAT special schools in Sheffield and believe that that will allow us to develop a better, longer-term, strategic view of what places are needed in which special schools in Sheffield, such that we reduce the pressure we currently see.

## What would happen to staff pay and terms & conditions?

Staff pay and conditions remain the same. In all academy conversions there is the protection of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (TUPE). Nexus MAT are committed to continuing to honour the local and national pay & conditions frameworks and agreements for both teaching staff and support staff, and all their academies continue to abide to local agreements (i.e., their Sheffield academies align with other Sheffield schools). The only time Nexus MAT has moved away from these was to give support staff a pay increase during the national pay freeze.

Headteachers in Nexus MAT schools are responsible for setting the curriculum, for designing the staffing structure and for appointing staff. There will be no change to these operations unless leaders and governors want changes, which is how things are now.

## Would there be automatic redundancies?

No, redundancies will not be part of the academisation process.

## What would happen to staff pensions?

All Nexus MAT employees continue to have access to the Teachers' Pension Scheme and the local government pension scheme so there would be no change. New staff would be enrolled in the same schemes as their peers.

### Where can I find further information?

There are many sources of information on the internet around academy conversion and the implications of becoming an academy, including:

<https://www.naswt.org.uk/advice/academies/academies-faqs.html#AcademiesFAQs>

<https://www.unison.org.uk/at-work/education-services/key-issues/academy-schools/>

[National Education Union | Home \(neu.org.uk\)](https://www.neu.org.uk/)