

STUTTON CEVCP SCHOOL

Information about Academies and Multi-Academy Trusts

What are Academies?

Academies are state-funded schools, receiving their funding directly from the government, rather than the Local Authority. They are overseen by individual charitable bodies called Academy Trusts. Under the present government, the Academy programme has been expanded to embrace all schools, putting more flexibility and ownership in the hands of individual schools, giving greater freedom to innovate and tailor provision to local needs and priorities.

Whilst government timescales and approaches have altered, the direction of travel remains the same and Multi-Academy Trusts have emerged as the preferred academy model. The proposed National Funding Formula for schools will have a significant impact on the Local Authority and therefore the support options available to schools. Schools need to ensure that they future-proof themselves against the financial and structural changes ahead.

What are the implications?

The stories in the press about the increasing pressures on school budgets are no fiction and finances are being squeezed. We anticipate that support currently provided by local authorities will reduce and schools will be asked to pay more for any support offered. Small rural schools are particularly vulnerable to increases in costs, with no corresponding equitable increase in income.

What next for Stutton CEVC Primary School?

As you know, doing nothing has not been an option for us and we have engaged in a great deal of information gathering to determine the options available and the best pathway for the children of Stutton. We have spoken to a number of schools, as well as a number of existing Multi Academy Trusts, and we are very excited about the opportunity Stutton now has to apply to convert to academy status and to join an established and respected primary Trust: ASSET Multi Academy Trust.

Who are ASSET Multi Academy Trust?

ASSET was formed in 2015, initially with three successful Ipswich based primary schools, St. Helens, The Oaks and Whitton. Since then, the Trust has grown to 8 schools, having taken on 5 smaller primary schools based in north Suffolk: Bungay, Edgar Sewter, Holton St. Peter, Ilketshall St. Lawrence and Wenhaston Primary School. The Trust is led by Executive Principal Clare Flintoff and a very experienced and diverse group of Trustees on the Trust

Board who bring a wide range of expertise to the MAT in their pursuit of educational excellence.

"We are a group of Suffolk schools aiming to make a real difference to education in our local area. Bringing together our skills and expertise, as well as learning from the best practice nationwide, our vision is to create a hub of outstanding practice in teaching and learning and real opportunities for the children in Suffolk to achieve the best outcomes possible"

The above is a brief quote from ASSET's website - to read more about ASSET, their vision and aims, visit their website: www.asseteducation.co.uk

What are the advantages of joining ASSET?

Joining an established primary Multi-Academy Trust would give our pupils exciting opportunities we may not be able to provide as a standalone primary school. In addition, being part of a family of schools could enhance the potential for all sorts of cost savings, economies of scale and increased purchasing power.

All staff will benefit from joint training opportunities and peer to peer support - working in a small primary school can be quite isolating. ASSET has already developed tried and tested systems, which should also reduce the burden of paperwork, which is quite considerable in a small school.

What difference will it make?

We believe there will be very little obvious change from the outside. Behind the scenes, things will work a little differently. The school will have a different bank account, we might purchase supplies and stock from different companies but day to day you probably won't see any difference. The children might notice more opportunities to use facilities at other local schools but most of the changes will happen behind the scenes to enhance provision and transition.

What happens next?

Following a period of due diligence, the full governing body has voted to pursue the next steps to initiate conversion to academy status, with a view to joining ASSET Multi Academy Trust. An important part of this phase is to launch a formal consultation with you, the parents, staff and other stakeholders. This is a crucial part of the process, which takes place in tandem with a host of other tasks that will be completed over the next few weeks. The consultation will take place from 26th February 2018 until 26th March 2018.

What do you think?

We are keen to hear your views and your questions. To explain the process more fully and give you the opportunity to ask questions, we would like to invite you to an information meeting on Monday 26th February at 7.00 p.m. at the school. Clare Flintoff, CEO of ASSET will talk about the vision and aspirations of ASSET and what membership will mean for our school. There will also be a series of drop in sessions on Fridays at 8.45 a.m. on 2nd, 9th, 16th and 23rd March, where governors will be on hand to talk to parents. Members of the community will be invited to a meeting on Monday 5th March at 7.00 p.m. also with Clare Flintoff - parents and their families will also be welcome to come along to this meeting.

Please don't worry if you can't attend any of these sessions in person. We will ensure everyone receives FAQs from the information meetings and we will keep you informed by letter or email. Your questions will help governors shape the next steps of the process and understand more fully what is important to you. Please come and take this opportunity to share your views and find out more. Ultimately, it's about the children and we feel that converting to an academy and joining a MAT with other primary schools will offer long term benefits in terms of pupil outcomes and will secure the future for Stutton School.

Frequently Asked Questions

Will the school name have to change?

No, we will still be called Stutton CEVCP School.

Will there be a change to the ethos of the school?

No, governors are very keen to ensure that the unique identity and ethos of the school is retained and that the school remains at the heart of the village and the local community. This has been discussed and agreed with ASSET.

Will we still retain close links with Holbrook Academy and the other peninsula primary schools?

We will still continue to work closely with other local schools and, if the opportunity arises, we will participate in joint projects, such as the recent Script, Sketch and Sail project and Shanties on the Shore. We will also work closely with Holbrook Academy to try and ensure a smooth transition from primary school to high school.

Who will be running the school?

Stutton CEVCP will still have its own Headteacher and its own local governing body who will be accountable to a board of ASSET MAT trustees. This board of Trustees will oversee all the schools in the MAT. There is a published scheme of delegation which clearly sets out where responsibilities lie.

When will Stutton CEVCP become an Academy?

If each stage is successful we are likely to convert in May 2018. Nothing is definite until the Secretary of State for Education and the school signs the agreement.

Is there a financial cost to the school?

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

Will the school have more money if it becomes an Academy?

The school will still have its own budget allocation from the DfE, but instead of this coming via the Local Authority, it will come via the MAT. Currently the LA keeps a percentage of this allocation. As an Academy, the vast proportion of the budget will be devolved to the school but a small percentage goes to ASSET. Specific figures will be available once we are able to get funding details from the DfE about budget shares. To get more specific financial information we need to progress to the next stage in the process.

Will admission arrangements remain the same?

Academies have the right to set their own admissions policies. However, we want to serve our local community and have no intention of changing the Local Authority admissions criteria. Parents would still apply to the local authority which would ensure absolute fairness in determining places.

Will academisation affect Staff pay and conditions?

Academies have the ability to set their own pay and conditions for staff. The current pay and conditions for teaching staff and non-teaching staff within school are determined by national agreements and the school has no intention of deviating from the current agreements.

All staff would transfer to the new academy under the TUPE provisions which would mean no change to their terms and conditions.

Will the curriculum change?

Academies do not have to follow the National Curriculum. However, this is unlikely to have any impact on the way that education provision is delivered. All schools have to provide a broad and balanced curriculum and will be judged against national standards, which to a large extent are based on the National Curriculum. If anything, we anticipate that our children will benefit from enhanced curriculum opportunities as part of a larger family of schools.

Will the schools in the MAT have the same holidays?

We don't envisage any changes in school holidays although we will probably work closely together with our family of schools to ensure that we maximise the opportunity to work together during training days.

If you have any questions, please email me at
joanna.hazlewood@stutton.suffolk.sch.uk

We can then add your questions to the website FAQs and make sure we include them at the planned consultation meetings.