

GOVERNORS OF OUTSTANDING SCHOOLS

5th November 2010

Dear Governor

Academy Conversion

Since the start of the new term 80 outstanding schools have already opened as Academies and over 60 more have taken up our offer to convert in the coming months. It is very encouraging that so many governors and head teachers are using this opportunity to take control of their schools and become Academies.

I know many of you will be considering the offer to convert to an Academy at your governing body meetings this term. As you consider the position of your school, and whether Academy status is right for you, it is important for you, as governors, to have the right information needed to make your decision. We have therefore produced some additional information to help answer your questions and to address some issues that have been raised in feedback from schools.

Many schools were keen to understand how becoming an Academy will benefit their school. We have published on our website, examples of what some of the Academies have been doing to raise standards and improve their school. The new Academies have been quick to make use of their new freedoms, innovating across all aspects of their work, such as curriculum, discipline, pastoral care, and staff development, to personalise the support they provide for their pupils. Seaton Academy in Cumbria is looking to employ more specialist staff, such as speech and language therapists. St Buryan Primary Academy in Cornwall has employed an extra teacher to reduce class sizes. And with greater control over their own budgets, Urmston Grammar School in Manchester is planning to restore lunchtime and after school services. We will continue to add case studies and examples of what schools have been saying about becoming an Academy to our website as more schools convert.

To help those considering applying for Academy status we have added additional advice and documents to our website on common issues such as funding, land, pensions and insurance and we will continue to update the conversion guide on the website to cover the issues that came up for the first wave of schools converting. We have also produced questions and answers to cover some of the main misconceptions around the conversion process and Academies policy. You can find this on the ['Becoming an Academy'](#) section of the website.

The draft model Funding Agreement for heads and governors is available on the website to help schools understand the framework within which the Academy must operate when it opens. The best help, however, comes from those heads and governors who have already successfully converted and can pass on their tips and experience. If you would find it helpful we can put you in touch with successful converters or experienced Academy principals and governors, to create a growing network of successful schools. We also intend to continue to support governors after the Academy has opened by publishing a version of the 'Governors Guide to the Law' covering Academies, to make sure Academy governors have the information they need to understand their role and responsibilities.

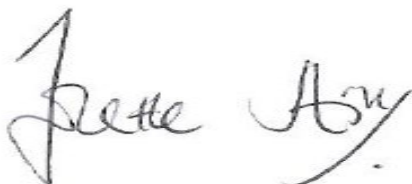
The Department is committed to supporting schools through the process and will contribute a flat-rate grant of £25,000 to schools that convert. We would expect all schools to look for ways to achieve best value for money and keep costs to a minimum, which might mean schools working with others who are converting to share resources. To reduce potential conversion costs to schools we have also produced model legal documentation which is available on the website.

We know Academies have had a dramatic impact where they already exist. The recent National Audit Office report highlights the continued success they are having, "with performance in Academies rising faster than in other types of schools". We also remain committed to sponsored Academies as the best solution in tackling the most significant areas of underperformance; the Secretary of State set this out in his recent letter to local authorities. The experience of the City Technology Colleges in England and other reforms across the world has shown that giving schools autonomy successfully drives up performance.

Governors and heads in outstanding schools across the country are converting to Academy status now or preparing to do so. Their staff, pupils and parents are already starting to see the benefits of Academy freedoms. And other local schools in their communities will also benefit, because all converting Academies will work with other schools so that standards in both improve.

We will help you overcome any practical issues that stand in your way and equip you with the information and support you need. The Department is now taking applications for schools planning to open in the spring term. If you have any further queries relating to Academy conversion, please email academy.conversion@education.gsi.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jonathan Hill', written in a cursive style.

JONATHAN HILL
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools