

Conversion of Earls Barton Primary School (EBPS) into an Academy with Hatton Academies Trust (HAT) - Questions and Answers for Parents

The following frequently asked questions have been put together to assist parents to understand the processes and activities which will take place through the process of EBPS converting to academy status with HAT.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is an Academy?

An Academy is a state school that is run by an Academy Trust. The Academy Trust enters into an agreement with the Secretary of State for Education that sets out its responsibilities and accountabilities for the effective running of the Academy. The Academy is funded directly by the Government and not through North Northamptonshire Council. The Trust is given exempt charitable status, which means it must operate much like a charity.

2. What is a Multi-Academy Trust?

A Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) is when two or more academies come together in partnership. Our Governing Board believes that the best option is to join Hatton Academies Trust. Hatton Academies Trust is a small local MAT with three primary schools, Oakway Academy, Victoria Primary Academy and Ecton Village Primary Academy, and one secondary school, Sir Christopher Hatton Academy.

3. Are we going to be part of a MAT chain?

We will become part of Hatton Academies Trust. The school will be expected to retain its individualities including its individual ethos and character. We will work together with other Trust settings and with colleagues from the Trust central team to secure future school improvement, and are excited to be collaborating with them.

4. Will pupils, staff and parents get to meet representatives from Hatton Academies Trust before the school becomes part of Hatton Academies Trust?

We have set up an opportunity to come and meet colleagues from the Trust on 12th February 2025. If you are attending a parents' evening appointment then please come to the school hall before or after if you have a specific questions to ask. There will be other opportunities to meet colleagues from the Trust before we officially join. Before then colleagues from the Trust have already started working with us as we get ready to join. You may see them at the start or end of a school day with senior leaders as pupils come in or leave. They would be more than happy to talk you informally if you have any questions.

5. How is a MAT run and how does governance work?

Within a MAT, all schools are part of and governed by one Academy Trust. Earls Barton Primary School would retain its own individuality and approach to education within the locality and still have a fully operational governing body. The responsibilities for the governors are set out in the Hatton Academies Trust Scheme of Delegation, which can be found [here](#).

6. Is this the right time to consider converting to an Academy?

Yes. Because we were rated by OFSTED as a 'Good' school at our last inspection, we can choose whether or not to become an academy rather than have the decision made for us, including determining which MAT we must join. As Governors, we must consider the option to convert as part of our duty to improve the quality of education we can provide for our pupils.

7. Will the school name change?

The school name will remain as Earls Barton Primary School.

8. Will the uniform change?

The school uniform will not change when we join Hatton Academies Trust.

9. What are the potential benefits of academy status?

There are a number of considered advantages through a MAT structure including:

- Through effective and meaningful collaboration between schools in the Trust, standards of education for every pupil can be improved.
- It is easier to share and implement best practice through member academies. For example, one academy may trial an innovate curriculum development or teaching approach and if successful, implementing this across the Trust can be considered by all Principals and Senior Leader in the Trust.
- Shared resource pools allow easier forward planning (such as planning for the changes to the assessment criteria) and unexpected short-term demands (staff sickness and absence) can be met more easily.
- The support on offer to the school is enhanced in areas such as finance and operations, including health and safety, HR, estates management, IT etc.
- Opportunities for staff CPD are enhanced through the Trust Hatton Centre for Education and its work with the national CPD provider Best Practice Network. Staff also have full access to The National College, an extensive CPD portal.
- In a MAT, a group of schools is able to obtain better value when negotiating contracts for services such as insurance, accountancy, HR, Payroll, catering, broadband and other IT services. This leaves more funding for the school to use on other projects.

10. How are the children affected?

The children will not notice any immediate difference; they will be in the same uniform, in the same classrooms with the same teaching staff. We will continue to strive for academic excellence, alongside a broader experience in terms of opportunities in sport, art, music, drama, community service and culture. However, over time, the children will notice changes and improvements in the way that they learn, enhanced opportunities in other areas such as music or science. Interactions for older children with staff from the Trust secondary setting, all resulting in an improved educational experience.

11. Will we get more money as an Academy?

As an academy we don't receive any extra funding, but we are not paying North Northamptonshire Council for compulsory services either, so this funding should be re-directed to provide essential school and Trust services. All Trust services are established to support each Trust setting secure improvements in educational provision.

12. Will the Terms and Conditions of staff change?

There is no intention to change Terms and Conditions. Staff would officially be employed by Hatton Academies Trust and their existing employment rights would move across under the TUPE rules and thus be protected. The Trust is bound by STPCD document for teachers pay and conditions and the NJC Green Book for support staff pay and conditions, and adherence to these national pay scales is important.

13. Will the Trust employ non-qualified teachers?

No. All teachers are qualified and the Trust has a strong emphasis on CPD, internal growth and using our apprenticeship funding to provide increased skills to existing staff.

14. Will class sizes get any bigger?

Not as a direct result of joining Hatton Academies Trust. Other factors such as increase in catchment area population may cause class sizes to rise, but being an academy will enable the schools to plan their own response to this issue.

15. Will the school land be sold off for profit?

Upon joining Hatton Academies Trust, a standard lease is issued by North Northamptonshire Council to lease the land to the Trust for the next 125 years. Therefore, the Trust cannot sell off the land.

16. What does the academy actually own, do they own outright and or are they on renewable contracts?

The school will transfer the Terms & Conditions of staff over to the new academy and they own the inventory of the school. They lease the land and buildings from North Northamptonshire Council. They retain the responsibility to maintain the land and buildings, including capital refurbishment responsibility. The staff are employed by the Trust but are not expected to work in another academy in the Trust unless they wish to take a development opportunity or are happy to do so. The MAT is a charitable organisation, limited by guarantee.

17. Can the school be run as a business for profit?

Funding provided to the Trust to run its schools is used solely for that purpose and not on a profit basis. Some settings do build reserves over time to support the funding of planned projects such as enhanced buildings and learning areas.

18. Do they have to follow a set curriculum and are they still accountable to Ofsted etc?

The Trust is clear that one of the most important endeavours is to ensure the curriculum at Earls Barton remains high quality, ambitious and delivered consistently in order to achieve the best for pupils. We are always looking to improve the educational offer we provide for our pupils and this will not change just because we join Hatton Academies Trust.

19. Will the academy accounts be fully accessible and transparent?

Each year Hatton Academies Trust publish their accounts and file them at Companies House - they are transparent in that format.

20. Will the school day or term change?

The Trust has indicated this is a decision that would be expected to be taken at school level. It ensures we continue to abide by any statutory requirements regarding the length of the school day, hours taught in a week and the number of school days in an academic year.

21. Will our responsibilities in relation to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) change?

Responsibilities as part of Hatton Academies Trust in relation to SEND will be just the same as they are now. Converting to Academy status may provide benefits in this area through, for example, the sharing of expertise and support in exceptional cases.

22. Can a child with a statement/Education Health Care Plan nominate an Academy as his or her first choice school?

Yes. Responsibilities as part of Hatton Academies Trust in relation to admission of pupils with an EHCP will be just the same as they are now.

23. Will there be any changes to the admission criteria for the school or as pupils leave to move onto secondary school?

We can retain its admissions criteria as set out on the school website. By joining Hatton Academies Trust we will be able to ensure parents of children in Year 6 have a better chance of receiving an offer of a secondary school place at Sir Christopher Hatton Academy starting in 2026 should they wish to apply. Using the same Year 7 admissions process set out on the NNC website, all parents will be still be able to specify whichever secondary school they would like their child to attend. All admissions arrangements and related processes will continue to comply with the DfE Schools Admissions Code.

24. Will there be more exclusions as an Academy?

Academies have to follow the exact same government guidance and law on excluding pupils. This includes reporting exclusions to the Local Authority.

25. Will a parent's right to complain be affected?

Hatton Academies Trust has a Complaints Policy which is agreed by the DfE which gives an avenue for parents to complain.

26. How will the money raised by the PTA's be used?

We will continue to have our own autonomous Parent Teacher Association (PTA). The money raised by the PTA will only be used for us. The PTA is currently and will continue to be independent of the school, raising money for agreed resources or projects that have been asked for by the schools leadership.

27. Will joining a Trust affect the current building project being undertaken at the school?

The responsibility for completing the project will continue to lie with Northamptonshire County Council.

28. Is there a proposed date were the school will join Hatton Academies Trust?

There is no set date currently for conversion to the Trust but we expect this to come through soon and we expect it will be at some point during the summer term. We will confirm this with you when we know an exact date.