

# Q & A

## Proposal for Maidstone Infant School and Causton Junior School to become an Academy within the Seckford Education Trust

### **Why is Maidstone Infant School and Causton Junior School proposing to become an Academy?**

The Governors of Maidstone Infant School and Causton Junior School have been evaluating the School's options over a number of months and believe that joining the Seckford Education Trust is the best course of action for the long term benefit of pupils and staff at the School.

Please be assured that we have taken this decision very carefully and we are united in our view that this is the best way forward for our school to remain safe, unique and able to provide the best standard of care for our children. We are very excited by the changes ahead as we know that they will offer the best opportunities for our children and therefore you as parents and help us to meet all of our aims at Maidstone and Causton Federation.

### **Is Maidstone Infant School and Causton Junior School being forced to become an Academy?**

No. The Governors of Maidstone Infant School and Causton Junior School believe that joining the Seckford Education Trust is the best long term solution for the School.

### **Who is the Seckford Education Trust?**

The Seckford Education Trust is a Multi Academy Trust (MAT) – a single charitable company responsible for the running of several schools as academies. The Seckford Education Trust Board is ultimately accountable for the quality of education in all Seckford Education Trust schools as well as being responsible for the use of public money, the employer of all staff and responsible for the use of all Trust sites under the various leases.

The Seckford Education Trust is committed to providing excellent primary education and is based in Woodbridge. The other Schools in the Seckford Education Trust are Saxmundham Free School, Beccles Free School and Ixworth Free School. We will be the first primary schools to join Seckford Education Trust.

### **What is an Academy?**

Academies are publicly funded independent schools that are not managed by a local authority but their funding and accountability is directly with the Department for Education (Department for Education).

### **When would Maidstone Infant School and Causton Junior School become an Academy?**

We would expect that the process will take 3-4 months, work is underway and the planned conversion date is 1<sup>st</sup> July 2019.

### **Why is there a consultation?**

The Academies Act 2010 requires Governors to consult "such persons as they think appropriate" on whether the school should become an academy.

The Governing Body has agreed to work jointly with the Seckford Education Trust to consult with all key stakeholders about the academy conversion including parents, staff, pupils and other schools over a 4 week (term time) period from 23rd April 2019 to 3rd June 2019.

### **Does the school need agreement from the Local Authority to become an Academy?**

No. The Academies Act 2010 has removed the need for the Local Authority to approve plans for the school to become an Academy.

### **What form of relationship will exist between the Local Authority and the school?**

This is for individual Academies or Multi Academy Trusts to determine – there is no statutory requirement for any formal relationship between Local Authorities and Academies. Academies are directly funded and accountable to central government (Department for Education and the Education Funding Agency).

The Local Authority retains statutory duties for aspects of Special Educational Needs, admissions coordination and provision of home-to-school transport. Local Authorities are also expected to play a key strategic role locally in areas such as pupil place planning admissions and sharing good practice.

However, Maidstone Infant School and Causton Junior School has a good relationship with Suffolk County Council and we expect this to continue after it has joined the Seckford Education Trust.

### **Will the school change its name and uniform as some Academies have done?**

The schools will change their name to SET Causton Junior School, SET Maidstone Infant School. There maybe changes to the uniform but these have not been confirmed yet.

### **Are Academies subject to the same Ofsted inspection regime?**

Schools converting to Academies will continue to be inspected in the normal way.

### **What changes will there be at Maidstone and Causton ?**

On a day to day basis, academisation makes very little difference to the running of the school except the advantages that it will bring in providing additional support for our school at all levels. You will see very few changes to the school. There will be no change in teaching staff, class sizes. Breakfast Club and afterschool clubs will remain as it is and the cost will remain as is. School meals will be provided in exactly the same manner as they are currently

### **Why have we chosen Seckford Education Trust?**

This is a small trust, run by people who have a school background. The ethos of the trust is about giving opportunities to all and is very child centered. In all of the meetings we have had with representatives from the trust we have been very impressed with both the integrity and professionalism they have shown. The motives of the trust are to improve children's lives through education. As leaders of this good school, we have taken this decision with real gravity. We know the difference a trust can make and we have selected a trust that we know aligns with our own ethos in treating children and staff well.

## **What is the process for Maidstone Infant School and Causton Junior School to join the Seckford Education Trust?**

As Maidstone Infant School and Causton Junior School is proposing to join an existing Multi Academy Trust, there is no need to set up a separate company. However, the conversion process includes the following key legal processes:

- Putting in place a Supplementary Funding Agreement between the Seckford Education Trust and the Secretary of State for the running and funding Maidstone Infant School and Causton Junior School;
- Transferring the employment of the staff from the local authority to SET following a statutory process (TUPE);
- Agreeing a Commercial Transfer Agreement for the transfer of assets and contracts from the local authority to EAT; and
- Arranging a 125 year lease for the land and buildings with the local authority.

## **Will we get more money as an Academy?**

Academies receive the same amount of per-pupil funding as they would receive from the Local Authority as a maintained school.

The Government is clear that becoming an Academy should not bring about a financial advantage or disadvantage to a school. However, academies do have greater freedom to decide how they use their entire budget.

## **Can new Academies decide to bring in academic selection?**

No, there will be no expansion of selection. Schools which already select some or all of their pupils may continue to do so when they become Academies, but schools becoming Academies cannot decide to become newly selective schools.

## **Will our responsibilities in relation to Special Educational Needs and exclusions change?**

No. Responsibilities as an Academy in relation to Special Educational Needs and exclusions will be just the same as they are now as a maintained school.

## **Can a child with an Educational Health Care Plan nominate an academy as their school of choice?**

Yes. These arrangements and related processes must at all times comply with the School Admissions Code and responsibilities as an Academy in relation to Special Educational Needs will be just the same as they are now as a maintained school.