

JOINING ADVANTAGE SCHOOLS



ADVANTAGE
SCHOOLS

**FREQUENTLY
ASKED QUESTIONS**

www.advantageschools.co.uk

Why should we join a School Trust and what is in it for us?

Advantage Schools is ambitious, forward-thinking and wants to develop its schools to be the best in the country. We employ a central team of the very highest quality people and ensure value for money. This allows Principals and Headteachers to run schools focussed on the curriculum and teaching and learning, free from other things that might be distracting. We take responsibility for many aspects, including the following, working to the highest standards:

Strategic Vision



- System leadership and succession planning
- Condition Improvement Planning
- Development of further links
- Expansion

Governance and Compliance



- Health and safety
- Finance and audit
- Admissions and appeals
- Welfare, safeguarding and child protection
- Website audit
- Procurement
- Complaints
- HR, recruitment and retention

School Improvement



- Curriculum development
- Professional Learning for teachers and support staff
- Performance management at all levels
- Development of the quality of teaching
- Extensive SEND experience
- Positive behaviour routines

Marketing and Communication



- Communication Strategy
- Website development
- Links with the community and families

How much does it cost the school and what does the school receive for this money?

We employ the very best central executive team and central services by pooling the money from individual schools and supplementing this with centrally-organised bids for funding. This is currently 5% of the school's GAG. We have found that this has been more efficient than when our individual schools took on this role and after one year of operation each of our schools have had surpluses that can be spent on pupils' education. This has been created by the provision of shared professional learning, centralised efficient financial and operations services, and benchmarking extensively.

What does this mean for our governors?

There are three tiers of governance in a School Trust: Members are like the shareholders of a company and are 'keepers of the flame' and meet twice a year. The Board of Directors maintain accountability for the School Trust and shape the strategic direction. The Local Governing Body (LGB) focuses on the standards and health and safety in an individual school.

What is a Local Governing Body (LGB)?

The LGB of a school focuses on the standards of teaching and learning, supporting and challenging the leadership of the Principal. Our communications strategy ensures that LGBs are fully informed, have clear communication lines to the Board of Directors, and are able to make a significant difference to their schools. The LGB is a crucial part of governance of a school.

Can our Governors join the Board of Directors?

There are 11 Directors, each with a 4-year term. The Board of Directors recruits the best people able to lead the best School Trust. Each of our Directors has an exceptional skill-set, and we ensure a balance of skills on the board in order to hold the CEO and executive team to account and direct the Trust strategically. Applications are open and particularly welcomed from those in the communities that our schools serve.

Will we have control over our finances?

We have found that a central finance function has allowed us to employ some of the very best people. Our scheme of delegation allows for flexibility as to the extent of this, but as one organisation, we are audited as a whole. We have exceptional financial systems that allow leaders and governors to be fully informed.

What will we have control over and what are we giving up?

Our scheme of delegation, which is under constant review by our Board of Directors, outlines the responsibilities at each level of governance. The latest iteration of the scheme of delegation is on the Advantage Schools website.

Does the Trust take our reserves or eliminate our deficit?

A school's reserves are listed as belonging to the school. While we are one financial entity, we continue to list reserves or deficits next to each school. Being a bigger entity allows us to act as an 'insurance policy' where schools need support.

Do we need to get permission to join?

Yes. The school and Advantage Schools will need permission from the Secretary of State for Education via the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). Together we will be required to set out a business plan, on which we can advise you.

We are an excellent school already: what are the benefits for us?

The level of challenge and expectation that comes from being a part of Advantage Schools means that we expect schools to be even better as a result of joining our family. We have a great track record in leadership, standards, curriculum, recruitment, operations, governance, estates and financial management. We are confident that we can be better as part of a larger entity and have more influence on education and the system.

We have some great staff that know our pupils. Will their jobs be at risk?

We always operate in the best interests of our pupils. We keep great staff. Being a part of a bigger organisation can mean that we can find opportunities for staff to develop their career whilst still serving our pupils and families.

Do we need to consult?

Yes. The Department for Education guidance suggests that both the school and Advantage Schools will need to consult with significant stakeholders. The consultation must be designed to maximise the response, so will usually be held in school term-time. We can advise you on this.

What is the process?

The running of the school transfers to Advantage Schools. The steps are:

- Advantage Schools enters into a funding agreement for the school
- The employment of staff transfers to Advantage Schools in accordance with the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006
- The assets and contracts of the school transfer to Advantage Schools
- Advantage Schools is given use of the school buildings and land, often via a long lease with the local authority, or via the freehold

Is it reversible?

Once the school joins Advantage Schools, this can only be reversed by the Department for Education, usually via the Regional Schools Commissioner. This is one of the reasons we encourage schools to do complete due diligence – we want schools completely committed to making a difference to all of our pupils and families and hence committed to making Advantage Schools even better.

Where can I find out more?

On the DFE website, the latest version of the Governance Handbook for academies, multi-academy trusts and maintained schools gives even more information.

What are our next steps?

A governing body or trust board need to agree to engage in due diligence with Advantage Schools – meaning we can share information freely and confidentially. We are committed to being open and transparent and so as part of any process we will share with you everything you need. Following this, the governing body or trust board, if satisfied, will pass a resolution to join Advantage Schools. We can advise you with all of this.

AN OPPORTUNITY
TO TRANSFORM OUR
EDUCATION SYSTEM
INTO ONE THAT IS
THE VERY BEST



If you would find it useful, our executive team and CEO would be delighted to meet with you.

We are also happy to visit individual schools or School Trusts, and always happy to host visits at our schools. We are particularly pleased to collaborate with other schools and School Trusts.

**You can get in touch with our central executive team
in the following ways:**

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