

Frequently Asked Questions from Families

Becoming a Dixons academy

Who are Dixons?

We are a charitable trust running schools in Bradford, Leeds, Manchester and Liverpool. We have an inner-city model and focus on turning around failing schools or opening new ones in areas of educational and social disadvantage. We have doubled in size in the last five years, and for the past few years we have been consistently among the top two or three highest-performing trusts in the country for secondary progress.

From this position of strength, we believe we have a moral and social duty to take on more schools, and plan to double again in size over the next four or five years. To this end, we have started to build our new hubs in Liverpool and Manchester. We recently took on Fazakerley High School and Broadgreen international School, now known as Dixons Fazakerley Academy and Dixons Broadgreen Academy respectively.

Why has this decision been made without public consultation?

The academy received a Termination (Closure) Warning Notice from the Regional Schools Commissioner following the inadequate Ofsted judgement in January 2020. The Regional Schools Commissioner has a responsibility to select an appropriate sponsor to secure the long-term future of the school. In De La Salle's case, that match was the Dixons Academies Trust.

Will the academy stay a single-sex boys' school?

For existing year-groups and current Year 6 applicants, yes.

At Dixons we run co-educational schools, however, and we shall admit both boys and girls to Year 7 from September 2023.

Will the academy stay a Catholic school?

No. Our academies are non-faith schools and the school will lose its religious designation. It will welcome students of all faiths and of none, as it does now.

Will the children still receive religious education?

Religious Education is part of the National Curriculum. Although it will lose its main focus on Catholicism, like all our academies the school follow both the National Curriculum and the guidance set out in the local SACRE (Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education). This is in line with both schools' and academies' funding agreements and the requirements of Ofsted for all schools.

I chose De La Salle for my child because it was a Catholic school. If parents wish to withdraw their children from the school, what support will be provided to do this?

We would hope that parents and carers will give us some time to demonstrate what we are about as a Trust before making any decisions about removing their child/ren from the school. Our aim is simply to improve as much as we can for the children who attend the school and to work with staff to ensure that a high-quality education is delivered for all.

However, the Diocese will offer current Catholic students a place at an RC faith school if required.

Will the school remain non-selective?

Yes. The Admissions policy for the school will be based on distance. It is the aim of the Trust to ensure that our academies provide high quality, inclusive education for local children, without selection.

Academies are required to follow the law and guidance on admissions, special educational needs and exclusions as if they were maintained schools.

Will the times of the school day and holidays change?

Like any school, where we make any changes to the timings of the school day this will be done in consultation with families.

We will follow much the same school holiday pattern as other schools in the Local Authority. The only exception to this is at the start of the academic year, when we start a week earlier than other schools and then take a two-week break in October rather than a week's half-term. We find this maintains learning much better in the long run-up between September and Christmas. We will not be altering the calendar for the school that has already been published, so we shall consult on this change for 2023.

How will governance work?

The Dixons Academies Trust has a Board of Trustees who are ultimately responsible for the work of the Trust and our academies. However, we devolve as much responsibility as possible to the individual academies. The Board of Trustees is responsible for appointing most of the governors on each local governing body (LGB).

Each academy is overseen by an LGB. Some local governing bodies oversee a single academy while others oversee two schools in similar circumstances. Each LGB works with the school leadership to check that the academy is making good progress and has



parent/carer representatives as well as a staff governor. Our Scheme of Delegation defines the powers and duties of the LGB, which are the same across each of the academies within the Trust.

School name

Will the school need to change its name?

Yes. We shall consult on this, but our preferred option is Dixons Croxteth Academy.

Why does the school have to change its name?

Our academies make up a family of schools and Dixons is our family name. We root our schools in their local community.

Uniform

Will the school have a new uniform? If so, when will this be expected to be worn?

Yes. We will provide financial support for all students that will be returning to school in years 8 to 11. This will be in the form of a voucher to support with the cost of new uniform and PE kit. We will consult on the nature and colour of the uniform and full details will be available on a Uniform FAQs document that will be shared following the consultation. This change will not take place until September 2022.

As opposed to changing the uniform, couldn't the money be spent on purchasing resources for the school instead?

A new uniform marks a new step-change in the transformation of the school. The cost of the new uniform bundles will be met by additional funding secured by the Trust and will not be at the detriment of any resourcing that children need as part of their education.

Special Educational Needs

How does this change affect SEND funding?

SEND funding will come directly from the government through the Education and Skills Funding Agency, as it does now. Funding allocated to a named child would continue to be funded directly by Liverpool Local Authority.

Staffing

Will the staff stay the same?

All permanent staff are entitled to transfer to Dixons Academies Trust under the same employment terms and conditions.

Will the SLT remain the same?

All staff are protected under a process called TUPE and have the right to transfer across to employment with Dixons Academies Trust at the point of final conversion.

Will the terms of employment for staff change?

As part of staff transfer (TUPE) arrangements, staff are entitled to transfer to the new academy under the same employment terms and conditions. However, it is essential that the academy responds to the changing curriculum requirements and educational demands. This may, therefore, require consultation with staff and trade unions, once the academy has been established, on changes to terms and conditions of employment. This would be necessary, for example, if curriculum demands and the need for improved educational outcomes required a different leadership and organisational structure.

General questions

What will Dixons' priorities be when addressing the issues at the school? Will you seek comments and suggestions from parents about improvements?

We will be working to improve all elements of school life to ensure the very best experience for our students. Feedback from parents and families will form a vital part of this transformation.

The new academy will have a brand-new website which will have a wealth of information for parents. You may wish to visit our Trust website which gives some more details about how we operate (dixonsat.com). We also have a social media presence on Twitter and we have also recently launched our own YouTube channel for staff training, called *Dixons OpenSource*, which you can find here: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDVvwEL_gBsnt1cE5kDbSEw.

We shall shortly be calling an open meeting for parents to meet us and hear of our plans for the school. We look forward to working with all parents/carers.

How will you ensure that the academy has good quality teachers?

Our aim is to improve all elements of school life to ensure the very best experience for students and staff. We were one of the first Teaching Schools to be designated in the country and we also have Research School status. We have vast experience in teacher training and professional development with a view to developing the very best staff. Here is the link to our Teaching Institute website (dixonsat.com/teaching-institute) where you can find out more about our work in developing our colleagues.



How will Dixons communicate with parents and carers?

Communication with families is a priority in any school and it is especially important to us. We will also work with the various social media platforms as a way to celebrate and share the success of our students.

After conversion, we shall run a thirteen-week curriculum and assessment cycle, and parents/carers will be updated on the progress and attainment of their child. Our parents' evenings are very well attended, 100% in some academies where we have followed up with those unable to make it. We also make more use than most of postcards home, positive telephone calls, and, where appropriate, home visits.

Will the academy follow the National Curriculum?

Yes, and very much focused on EBacc (English, maths, science, humanities and a modern foreign language). We want to get as many children as possible strong grades in high value qualifications to maximise their life chances.

Academies do have more freedom to try different things in the curriculum, but our own is centred around a common, shared, high-quality offer for all.

Academies

What is an academy?

Academies are independent, state-funded schools, which receive their funding directly from central government rather than through a local authority. The day-to-day running of the school is the responsibility of the Principal, but they are overseen by individual charitable bodies called academy trusts and may be part of a family of schools, like Dixons. These multi-academy trusts provide advice, support, expertise and a strategic overview.

Academies control their own admissions process and have more freedom than other schools to innovate.

The following link will take you to the website of the Confederation of School Trusts, where myths about academies and academy trusts are explained: https://cstuk.org.uk/assets/Trust-The-Facts/Trust%20The%20Facts_Myth%20Busting.pdf.

Is an academy like a business?

No, a business makes a profit for its shareholders. An academy is a charitable trust which cannot make a profit.

Are academies bound by the same rules and regulations as other schools?

Academies are required to follow the law and guidance on admissions, special educational needs and exclusions.

Does becoming part of a multi academy trust change the relationship with local schools and the community?

No, academy funding agreements state that they must ensure that the school will be at the heart of its community, collaborating and sharing facilities and expertise with other local schools and the wider community. At Dixons, we work hard to ensure that the school remains at the heart of its community and that it invests in these relationships.

As an academy, will it still work with the local authority (LA)?

Academies are independent of the local authority. However, we wish to continue working with the LA, other local schools and local partners.

What will happen to the school's funding?

The Department for Education meets the running costs for an academy in full. Academy funding is calculated on a like-for-like basis with local authority schools. Therefore, the academy will have a similar budget to that of its predecessor school. With greater freedom to procure services from other providers and to realise cost efficiencies across the network, the academy will be able to make more efficient use of resources to support school improvement. Like other schools, an academy cannot run at a loss or agree a deficit budget, i.e. it has to break-even.

There is no financial incentive to sponsor an academy. What we will be able to do is to accelerate the progress of the school and move more quickly to outstanding by bringing additional resources and expertise to the school community.

How will the school be financially accountable?

An academy is governed by the rules and regulations for charitable trusts. For example, we will be required to produce and file annual accounts, and trustees cannot be paid. There will be robust systems with an audit conducted by an external independent auditor.

When will these changes commence?

We will be working with the school over the next few months in preparation for an official conversion at the start of the new academic year in September. Before then, we shall be working with the current leadership team to improve the academy. We will ensure that parents/carers are kept fully informed as we move forward.

