

## Frequently Asked Questions from Broadgreen Families

### Becoming a Dixons academy

#### ***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/guidance-improvement-hub/myth-busting>.

#### ***Who are Dixons?***

We are a charitable trust running twelve schools in Bradford and Leeds. 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, building hubs along the M62 in Liverpool and Manchester.

#### ***Why has this decision been made without public consultation?***

The school was given a Directive Academy Order by the Secretary of State for Education following the inadequate Ofsted judgement in December 2018. The Regional Schools Commissioner has a responsibility to select an appropriate sponsor to secure the long-term future of the school. In Broadgreen's case, that match was the Dixons Academies Trust.

#### ***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 an academy 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.

#### ***How does 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 the majority 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.

#### ***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 maintained 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.

However, as a PFI school, Broadgreen is subject to an £1.2m annual charge, and because the school is not full it does not have the income both to pay this fixed charge and to invest fully in the education of its students. We have, as part of the due diligence, carried



out a full financial analysis and will now enter into discussions with the Department for Education regarding additional financial support for the first five years while we build student numbers back up to where they should be.

#### ***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 later this year. Whilst it is not yet definite, we are currently working towards a target date of 1 October 2021 for the school to convert to an academy. We will ensure that parents/carers are kept fully informed as we move forward.

## **SEND**

#### ***How does academy status affect SEND funding?***

SEND funding will come directly from the government through the Education and Skills Funding Agency. Funding allocated to a named child would continue to be funded directly by the local authority.

#### ***Who will own the school buildings and land?***

The local authority will be required to grant a 125 year lease to the Trust.

## **Staffing**

#### ***Will the staff stay the same?***

When a school converts from a local authority maintained school to a new academy, all permanent staff are entitled to transfer to it 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.

We are aware of two impending resignations from the senior leadership team and we have already appointed to one of these positions. A formal announcement of these arrangements is expected soon.

#### ***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 if, for example, the Trust wished to introduce a particular organisational change to the academy's term dates, or if curriculum demands and the need for improved educational outcomes required a different leadership and organisational structure.

## **School name**

#### ***Will the school need to change its name?***

Yes, the school will need a new name as it will open as a new school when it converts to an academy. The new school name will begin with Dixons to recognise that it belongs to the Dixons family of schools. The second part of the name will be chosen by the school to reflect its own community. For example, Dixons Broadgreen Academy.

#### ***Why does the school have to change its name?***

Broadgreen is joining a family of schools and Dixons is our family name. Broadgreen will retain its identity: all our schools are slightly different and are representative of the communities that they serve.

## **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 have consulted on the nature and colour of the uniform and full details are available on the Uniform FAQs documents. All students will be expected to arrive at school wearing this uniform in September 2021, therefore the new uniform will be available to purchase from local retailers from July onwards

#### ***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.



## Local community

### ***Will the school still be involved with the wider local community?***

Absolutely, we understand the important part that Broadgreen plays in the community, and we very much want this to continue. This is really important to us.

### ***I chose Broadgreen for my child because it is a key part of our community. If parents wish to withdraw their children from the school, what support will be provided to do this?***

We would hope that parents/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.

## General questions

### ***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.

### ***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. Broadgreen is already working on changes to the school day, and we will adopt whatever is decided for next academic year.

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 2022.

### ***How will Dixons communicate with parents and carers?***

Communication with families is a priority in any school and it is especially important to us; however, it is very challenging at the moment. By this stage of the process, we would normally have already had several open meetings for families to attend.

The new academy will have a brand-new website which will have a wealth of information for parents. 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. We have a social media presence on Twitter and have recently launched a YouTube channel for staff training, Dixons OpenSource ([https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDVvwEL\\_gBsnt1cE5kDbSEw](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDVvwEL_gBsnt1cE5kDbSEw)).

### ***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 recruiting, retaining and developing the very best staff. Here is the link to our Teaching Institute website ([dixonsat.com/teaching-institute](http://dixonsat.com/teaching-institute)) where you can find out more about our work in developing our colleagues.

### ***Will the school remain non-selective?***

Yes, the Admissions policy for the school will not change and we shall continue to serve all 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. It is the aim of the Trust to ensure that our academies provide high quality, inclusive education for local children.

### ***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. You may wish to visit our Trust website which gives some more details about how we operate ([dixonsat.com](http://dixonsat.com)). We look forward to working with all parents/carers.

### ***Will the religious education that students receive stay the same?***

All of our academies 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.

