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Convert to an academy: guide for schools

From: **Department for Education**
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5. Prepare to open as an academy

What final preparations you should complete before your school can open as an academy.

Finish statutory consultation

You should have finished consulting (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/convert-to-an-academy-information-for-schools/3-prepare-for-conversion#consultation>) with everyone interested in the school's plans to convert to academy status. Your governing body should review the responses and decide what action they wish to take as a result.

You should now get in touch with your project lead and inform them of the outcome of the consultation.

Final funding agreement

You should sign 2 undated paper copies of the final agreed version of the funding agreement (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/convert-to-an-academy-information-for-schools/3-prepare-for-conversion#draft-funding>) and send them to your project lead. They will check the agreement one last time and ask the Secretary of State to sign, seal and date it.

We will keep 1 copy of the signed funding agreement and return the other to you (or your solicitor). If your school is a faith school, the diocese may wish to keep a third copy for its own records.

You will need to publish a copy of the signed funding agreement on your school's website when you open as an academy.

The deadline by which you need to send your project lead hard copies of your signed, undated, funding agreement is in the 'Academy conversion: important dates' document (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academy-conversion-important-dates>).

Open your academy's bank account

When you have finished the process of opening the bank account (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/convert-to-an-academy-information-for-schools/3-prepare-for-conversion#bank-account>) for your academy trust, send your account details to the Education Funding Agency (EFA) using the academy bank details form (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academy-bank-details-form>). Make sure you copy your project lead into the email.

You should send EFA your new bank account information by the middle of the month before you are planning to reopen as an academy.

The deadline by which you need to send EFA details of your academy's bank account is in the 'Academy conversion: important dates' (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academy-conversion-important-dates>) document.

You will need to agree a closing balance with your local authority and transfer any surplus money from your former school bank account to your academy trust account. You will then be able to close the old account.

Appoint academy officers and auditors

Accounting officer

Your academy must have an accounting officer responsible for the academy's finances. They will oversee the chief finance officer (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/convert-to-an-academy-information-for-schools/5-prepare-to-reopen-as-an-academy#chief-finance-officer>).

In single-academy trusts, the accounting officer should be the headteacher. In multi-academy trusts, it should be the chief executive or executive headteacher.

You can find more information in the 'Academies financial handbook' (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academies-financial-handbook>).

Chief finance officer

The board of your academy trust must appoint a chief finance officer (CFO), who will act as the trust's finance director or business manager.

The CFO should:

- make sure the academy trust's financial governance and risk management arrangements are sound and appropriate
- prepare and monitor the academy trust's budgets
- produce the annual accounts

You can find more information in the 'Academies financial handbook' (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academies-financial-handbook>).

External auditors

Your academy trust must appoint an external auditor to certify your accounts.

You can find more information in the 'Academies financial handbook' (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academies-financial-handbook>).

Register with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)

Under the Data Protection Act 1998 (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/29/contents>), your academy will be responsible for storing and processing all your pupils' and staff members' personal data.

You must contact ICO (<http://ico.org.uk/>) to let them know that your academy is opening. ICO will add the information you give them to their register, which is open to the public.

You'll have to pay a fee of £35, which you can pay from your support grant.

Appoint a data protection officer

The ICO strongly recommends that you make a specific staff member responsible for:

- raising awareness about data protection among staff members
- making sure staff members are adhering to the academy's data protection policies
- making sure your academy updates its data protection policies regularly

Visit the ICO website for more advice for schools on data protection

(http://ico.org.uk/for_organisations/sector_guides/education).

Insurance

Your academy trust will be responsible for insurance. You can either:

- opt in to the risk protection arrangement (RPA) (<https://www.gov.uk/academies-risk-protection-arrangement-rpa>), which is an alternative to commercial insurance that protects academy trusts against losses due to unexpected events.
- use a commercial insurance provider - in this case we recommend that you use one of the following, which DfE has made with arrangements with:
 - Crown Commercial Service (CCS) (<http://ccs.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/contracts/rm958>)
 - Crescent Purchasing Consortium (CPC) (<http://www.academies.thecpc.ac.uk/news/article.php?articleID=420>)

If you wish to opt into the RPA scheme, you should let your project lead know.

EFA allocates academies £25 per pupil every year for them to spend on RPA or insurance.

PFI academy trusts

If your academy trust is part of a private finance initiative (PFI) scheme, you may be legally required to take out commercial insurance as part of your PFI contract.

These academies can join the RPA to cover any risks not included in their PFI contract.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks

All members of staff, local governors and members of the trust must have a current Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check (<https://www.gov.uk/disclosure-barring-service-check/overview>) before you can appoint them.

Talk to your project lead about DBS checks for your chair of trustees. Their DBS check must go through the DfE so the Secretary of State for Education can countersign it.

Complaints procedure

You must establish a complaints procedure (<https://www.gov.uk/dfegovernors-handbook>) for your new academy.

Academy complaints procedures are different from those of maintained schools. You should make sure your new complaints procedure complies with The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2010 (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made>).

Notify Edubase

Contact Edubase (<http://www.edubase.gov.uk/edubase/home.xhtml>) so they issue your academy's new unique reference number (URN).

If your new URN doesn't appear on Edubase within 1 week of you contacting them, let your project lead know.

Notify exam boards

If you are a secondary academy, you can continue to use the same exam centre number, but you need to let the National Centre Number Register know about your change to academy status. You should also inform them of your new name if you changed it as part of the conversion process.

The National Centre Number Register will pass this information on to all awarding bodies.

You can contact the National Centre Number Register on 01223 553 600.