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# Academy Conversion

## What you need to know



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01332 340 211

[www.fb-education.co.uk](http://www.fb-education.co.uk)



**Andrew Nicklin**

*Employment Law Solicitor*

@ [andrew.nicklin@flintbishop.co.uk](mailto:andrew.nicklin@flintbishop.co.uk)

☎ 01332 340 211

# Academy Conversion Update

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In the Budget, on 16 March and White Paper of 17 March 2016, the Government's plans for academy conversion were clearly set out. The Chancellor's announcement that the Government will require all schools to convert or be in the process of converting to academy status by 2020, came as a shock to many people. We were all left in no doubt that any school that failed to convert would be compelled to do so, and the White Paper sets out how this will be achieved.

At Flint Bishop we recently held a series of forums for schools on academy conversion. Now that this issue is firmly back in the spotlight, you may feel that you need further information to help you make early informed decisions about the future of your school.

## Reactions to the announcement

This is no small scale change. Whilst a large proportion of secondary schools in the UK have already converted to Academies, all 17,000 schools which have not already converted to academy status, mostly primary schools, will be required to do so.

The Government's plans have already proven to be unpopular with Unions, with the NUT, NASUWT and even the ATL, having recently considered the prospect of industrial action at their annual conferences.

Many, in the education sector, fear that schools will lose their identity and be 'swallowed up' by large chains which will have little regard to the wishes of parents, staff or local communities.

However schools can avoid this by acting now and deciding for themselves how to best manage the transition rather than waiting for the Government to force conversion upon them. Early preparation work in sourcing potential partners is the best way of protecting the essential characteristics of your school.

## Considerations for schools

Working with other schools or trusts is likely to require an amount of restructuring such as harmonising policies, reform and development of structures, not to mention developing a clear picture of roles and responsibilities. This has to align throughout a school's governors, trustees, senior leaders and the Executive Principal or Chief Executive.

There are many things to think about before converting including:

- What will the Blueprint be?
- Who will do what in your MAT?
- What do you want the MAT to look like?
- What will partnership working look like?
- Where will responsibility lie?

There has been many changes since the Academies Act came into force in 2010.

Structures that were fit for purpose even a couple of years ago; will need to be reviewed in light of Ofsted changes and DfE regulation.

### **Why is external support necessary?**

Our experience of working with over one hundred schools shows that having a clear plan, based on experience and pupil outcomes makes the whole process of coming together easier.

Becoming or joining a MAT is a shift for all concerned. Day-to-day school life may not change that much, but for the senior leadership team, governors, school admin and business support, there are changes which will require some time for adjustment.

Flint Bishop provides a range of support which is bespoke for each school. Our team of specialist Solicitors have worked with schools for many years and understanding the ever-changing education landscape is a vital factor in our work.

Many of the school leaders and governors we have worked with truly value a whole project management service for strategic reviews as it is like having an independent third party who can facilitate the process, draft the structures and advise on the legal requirements throughout. Others wish to take advice at certain points and have support for specific legal issues. We always aim to adapt our approach to suit your needs.

We are planning a series of forums for the summer term to look at the detail of the White Paper, the role of CEOs and school leaders in MATs. This will include hearing about the experience of a current Primary School MAT from its Executive Principal and a forum for Special Schools. As soon as we have further information (dates/venues) you will receive an email.

If you are thinking about converting or would like more information on MATs, please contact our specialist Education department on 01332 227 596 or email Mark Honeybell at [mark.honeybell@flintbishop.co.uk](mailto:mark.honeybell@flintbishop.co.uk)

# Legal Services Overview

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## Commercial Services:

### Commercial Contracts:

- Agency & Distribution
- Bribery Act Compliance
- Data Protection
- IT & e-Commerce
- Intellectual Property
- Outsourcing & Supply Agreements
- Public Procurement
- Terms & Conditions

### Commercial Property:

- Conditional Sale Agreements
- Development Agreements
- Joint Ventures (*as part of a wider team construction & public procurement*)
- Land Acquisition & Disposals (*including options*)
- Leases
- Planning / Section Agreements
- Profit Sharing / Overage Agreements
- Property Acquisition & Disposals
- Property Management

### Construction & Engineering:

- Adjudication
- Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)
- Appointment Documents for Professional Consultants
- Arbitration
- Building Contracts
- Dispute Management
- Litigation
- Security Documentation

### Corporate Finance:

- Acquisitions & Disposals
- Acquisitions Finance
- Buy-outs
- Company Secretarial Services
- Corporate Governance
- Joint Ventures
- Loan & Security Arrangements
- Partnerships
- Property Finance
- Reorganisation & Restructuring
- Shareholder Relations

### Dispute Resolution / Debt:

- Commercial Contract Disputes
- Shareholder and Partnership Disputes
- Insurance Disputes
- Injunctions
- Professional Negligence
- Alternative Dispute Resolution
- Property Litigation
- Insolvency
- Debt Recovery

### Licensing & Entertainment:

- Alcohol & Entertainment Licensing
- Betting & Gaming Licensing
- Regulatory Advice & Prosecutions
- Reviews & Enforcement
- Training

## Employment Law & HR:

- Contracts and policies
- Disciplinary matters
- Sickness and absence
- Capability
- Redundancy / restructuring
- Unfair dismissal
- Discrimination
- Restrictive covenants / restraint of trade
- TUPE
- Settlement agreements

## Private Client Services:

## Family & Divorce Law:

- Divorce
- Financial Matters
- Children Issues
- Cohabitation
- Civil Partnerships
- Pre-nuptial Agreements

## Residential Conveyancing:

- Buying / Selling Property
- Re-mortgaging
- Transfer of Equity
- Right to Buy
- Probate Sales

## Wills, Probate, Tax & Trusts:

- Wills
- Probate
- Lasting Powers of Attorney
- Court of Protection
- Inheritance Tax Planning
- Trusts

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SOLICITORS

**DERBY HEAD OFFICE**

St Michael's Court      Tel: 01332 340 211  
St Michael's Lane      Fax: 01332 207 601  
Derby DE1 3HQ      DX: 729320 Derby 24

[www.fb-education.co.uk](http://www.fb-education.co.uk)

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