



ACADEMIES

The criteria for schools converting to academies changed in 2010. Schools receiving an 'outstanding' Ofsted rating are able to convert to an academy and the number of applications, conversions and expressions of interest is increasing. Further changes have subsequently been made in that academies will remain publicly funded and independently run making conversion an attractive option for some schools.

Making the decision about converting to an academy is not easy and it is therefore essential that governing bodies are accurately informed of the various implications. Financial, regulatory and compliance procedures are all key considerations when establishing an academy.

Becoming an academy provides schools with significant additional freedom to manage their performance, both by determining the curriculum and by hiring and rewarding staff. Opting out of local authority control, however, also means that schools lose the benefit of local authority central services, such as legal and financial functions, and means that academies are independent companies in their own right, with all the responsibilities that brings with it.

To provide support in those areas that schools have not historically needed assistance with, UNW has tailored support services to meet your needs in a local, cost effective way that will give the Board the confidence that the academy's affairs are being properly looked after, both during the conversion process and thereafter.

UNW can offer guidance and support in the following areas:

- Establishing the opening financial position for the academy;
- Establishing finance policies, regulations and processes;
- Establishing board policies in relation to risk, reserves, accounting policies and training;
- Pension scheme arrangements in relation to local government pension schemes;
- Compliance with charity laws and regulations;
- Training and guidance on roles and responsibilities for governors and company directors;
- Accounting software selection and training;
- Payroll and employee benefits support services – we offer an outsourced payroll service that will take the hassle away from you and provide complete confidentiality;
- VAT services – we can offer support with your VAT requirements, providing advice and guidance where you need it, including importantly detailed assistance with the new VAT reclaim arrangements introduced from 1 April 2011;
- Responsible officer – we can perform the responsible officer role, ensuring this important role is undertaken by professionals and giving the Governors maximum confidence;
- Budgetary and strategic planning advice;
- The creation and maintenance of risk registers;
- Procurement matters;
- Capital and expansion requirements, including assistance with fund raising where appropriate;
- Provision of statutory audit services; and
- Obligations for company secretaries.

If you require assistance in considering academy conversion, please contact Andrew Wilson, Michael Morris or Julie Gilhespie on 0191 243 6000 or marketing@unw.co.uk.