

# Expression of interest

# Research on the perceived benefits and obstacles to academisation – the views of recent converters and local authority schools

**Project reference: DFEREF 20-21/009**

**Deadline for expressions of interest: 9am 28th July 2020**

## Summary

Expressions of interest are sought to investigate and understand the views of schools who are not academies and the experiences of those schools who have recently converted to academy status or joined an academy trust.

Our ambition is ultimately for every school that wants to, to have the opportunity to benefit from the autonomy and freedom to innovate that academy status can provide, and for schools to collaborate by coming together in strong trusts. The department seeks up-to-date evidence from schools that have recently converted on the experiences of being an academy and (where applicable) of being in a multi-academy trust (MAT). We also want evidence on why local authority schools have not chosen to become academies and join trusts. We hope to be able to use this information to design policies and communications to emphasise the attractions of being an academy in a trust and to tackle barriers that prevent schools from making that choice.

Although open to suggestions of alternative approaches, we envisage that this project will involve telephone interviews with around 300 local authority maintained schools about reasons for not becoming academies and around 300 academies about what they have gained from becoming academies.

## Background

The department’s aim is for every school that wants to, to have the opportunity to benefit from the autonomy and freedom to innovate that academy status can provide, and for schools to collaborate by coming together in strong trusts. However, there are gaps in the evidence on reasons why school leaders choose not to convert, and in-depth information about the perceived benefits to schools following conversion. The department has previously surveyed schools who have chosen to remain LA maintained (Ginnis et al 2017) and MATs about changes made in their schools following conversion (Cirin 2017), but we would like to update this evidence with a deeper examination of views and experiences.

There is evidence that conversion leads to improved financial performance, a more flexible workforce, improved leadership and greater collaboration but the evidence could be improved with an examination of detailed reasons why schools have not converted and specific changes made since conversion. Ginnis et al (2017) presented a number of factors that prevented schools from converting but the findings were high level and did not identify the most important elements in the decision making process.

## Research aims

The proposed project has two main aims:

Aim 1 - why have maintained schools decided not to convert to an academy (and to join a MAT)?

This research will help identify the various reasons that maintained schools feel prevent them from both converting and joining a MAT, plus the relative importance of each.

Aim 2 - What are the experiences of schools who have converted to become academies including those who have joined a MAT in the last couple of years?

This research will provide evidence about the realities of converting, and for those who have done so, joining a MAT including the specific benefits they experience over time. This will give a greater understanding of what happens in schools following conversion.

## Methodology

Although we are interested in alternative approaches, we are suggesting a survey using telephone interviews for both aims as they will allow interviewers to probe for more details to allow better understanding of the issues. We feel that online surveys would restrict respondents to giving shorter responses and we need to understand respondents’ views on barriers and benefits in some depth.

Why have schools decided not to convert and to join a MAT?

This should include a representative survey of maintained schools who could convert but have not yet done so. The sample will include schools of different characteristics i.e. phase, school type (VA, VC and non-faith/LA maintained), location, size of the school and urban/rural split.

We anticipate that we need around 300 responses to allow for some sub-group analysis.

What are the experiences of recently converted academies who have/have not joined a MAT in the last couple of years?

These interviews will be with converter academies rather than sponsored academies – that is, those that have voluntarily chosen to do so, rather than have been required to do so. It is hoped that, by focusing on relatively recent converters, many of the respondents will have been in the school prior to conversion and will have pre- and post-conversion knowledge and perspectives. The sample would need to include schools of different types e.g. phases, faith vs non-faith and locations.

To allow suitable subgroup analysis we anticipate needing around 300 completed interviews.

## Timing

* Deadline for EOIs – 9am 28th July 2020
* ITT issued – 30th July 2020
* Deadline for tenders – 9am 14th August 2020
* Anticipated start of project w/c 31st August 2020 (although exact fieldwork period to be agreed following award to be appropriate with wider opening of schools and their priorities)
* Draft final report by Christmas 2020 with final report by w/c 18th January 2021

## Assessment criteria

Your expression of interest should be **no more than 1,000 words** and there is no need to provide references at this stage.

EOIs will be assessed by the following criteria:

* Evidence of relevant methodological experience (telephone interviews)
* Evidence of understanding of academies and multi-academy trusts
* Capacity to complete the interviews and reporting by the deadlines given above

| **Closing date for EOIs: 9am 28th July 2020**  **Send your EOI form to: Robert.cirin@education.gov.uk** |
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## How to submit an expressions of interest

You must submit an expression of interest (EOI) in order to be considered to be invited to tender. To do so, please complete the NEW EOI Form which can be found under attachments. A submission of an EOI does not guarantee an invitation to tender and the Department does not routinely advise organisations that they have not been successful in being invited to tender. Feedback is however available on request.

All contracts are let on the basis of the Depatrtment’s Terms & Conditions, a copy is available attached to the ContractsFinder listing. You are encouraged to check these before submitting your expression of interest, as these form part of your contractual obligations.

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