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Our expertise in
supporting academies

Expertise for academies

Strong schools are essential not just for individuals, but to the wider economy and society. These crucial institutions need legal advisers with deep knowledge and experience, who speak their language and have the resources to assist with the most challenging of situations.

- We have acted for academy trusts since advising on the first ever academy conversion in 2003. With school governors and former teachers in our team, we understand the issues you face.
- Academies are an essential part of school-age education in the UK and are diverse in their character and legal needs. We look to establish long term relationships with our clients, so we can provide advice that is tailored, efficient and pragmatic. This advice is not commoditised, but bespoke and high quality, while at the same time representing excellent value for money.
- We understand not just law and regulation, but also the other requirements and expectations to which schools and their leaders are subject. These include public and regulatory attitudes to issues like safeguarding, political views on academisation, and associated reputational risks.
- We know that those running academies are under immense pressure given the importance of their work, their regulatory burden and the potentially severe consequences for individuals and organisations when things go wrong. With the benefit of long experience, we can guide governors and senior staff through the legal web efficiently, pragmatically and without fuss, allowing them to focus on their own work and students.



How we can help you

Our team can help on all matters you may encounter as an academy, including:

Core school matters and governance

- Day-to-day governance and other matters, including amendments to governing documents
- Engagements with the DfE and Education and Skills Funding Agency
- Admissions, exclusions and SEN provision
- Safeguarding advice
- School policies and handbooks
- Charity law requirements
- Trading and tax, including the establishment of trading subsidiaries and associated governance
- Advice on historic PFI funding issues

Crisis management

- Dispute resolution including mediation and complaints handling (including in relation to discrimination)
- Judicial reviews and challenging regulatory decisions
- Challenging Ofsted inspection results
- Independent reviews, whether in respect of safeguarding, employment, criminal or other matters (see the [Independent Reviews](#) section below)
- Media handling and reputation management
- Employment disputes and other HR matters



How we can help you

Our team can help on all matters you may encounter as an academy, including:

Commercial and other matters

- Public procurement
- Commercial contracts
- Intellectual property including trade mark protection and exploitation
- Data protection, including disputes and Subject Access Requests
- Property law matters including development and management advice
- Freedom of information advice
- Immigration law advice
- Employment, pensions and HR advice

Sponsorship

- Working with DfE approved academy trust sponsors

Major projects

- Admitting and removing schools and academy trust mergers
- Academy trust sponsorship
- Advising on the closure of an academy trust
- Construction law advice on property development



Independent Reviews

Allegations of peer-on-peer abuse, bullying and harassment, and other safeguarding issues continue to loom large in the education sector.

- When schools find themselves the target of allegations, often made publicly, they face complex challenges - ensuring that their students and staff are safe, and reassuring the wider community (including protecting their reputation), whilst, all the time, continuing the delivery of their core educational provision.
- To help address these challenges, institutions are increasingly looking to authoritative, independent reviewers to scrutinise and advise on their arrangements. At Withers, we have specialists in the key areas needed to conduct such reviews, and we are ready and able to assist.
- For further information on why an independent review is important, our team and our expertise, please [click here](#).





Our experience

Our experience

We advise academy trusts, their sponsors, and others in the sector.

One of the UK's leading philanthropists

on his education projects, including legal support around the establishment and operation of two academies and a friends of charity.

An academy

on successfully securing an injunction and re-inspection where the academy contested the results of its initial OFSTED inspection. This was a ground breaking outcome.

Marlowe Academy

on its merger with Ellington and Hereson School. This was a significant and well publicised merger which was ground-breaking due to the fact that Ellington and Hereson School is a PFI school and it was therefore not possible to convert into an academy immediately.

Multi-academy trust

on a merger joining six academies.

Large education grant making charity

on protecting £10 million of endowment funding for a multi academy trust with over 30 academies.

Two community schools

on all aspects of establishing a new charity and developing a purpose built community facility to provide adult education, a theatre, children's activities and hire spaces in a joint initiative between the schools and the local council.



“You have been amazing throughout the academy merger”.

CEO of a multi academy trust



Our team

Our dedicated team

Advising academies across the UK.



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