

Dixons Newall Green Academy

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a free school?

Free schools are newly created state schools that operate in law as academies. Whereas many academies are schools that have converted from previously being maintained by local authorities, free schools are funded by the government but are not run by the local authority.

This briefing paper answers FAQs about academies and free schools in England: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn07059/>

What is an academy?

Academies are independent, state-funded schools that receive their funding directly from central government, rather than through a local authority. The day-to-day running of the school is the responsibility of the Principal, but they are overseen by individual charitable bodies called academy trusts and may be part of a family of schools, like Dixons. These multi-academy trusts provide advice, support, expertise and a strategic overview.

Academies control their own admissions process and have more freedom than other schools to innovate.

The following link will take you to the website of the Confederation of School Trusts, where myths about academies and academy trusts are explained: <https://cstuk.org.uk/guidance-improvement-hub/myth-busting>.

Who are Dixons?

We are a charitable trust running 15 schools across Manchester, Liverpool, Bradford and Leeds. We have an inner-city model and focus on turning around failing schools or opening new ones in areas of educational and social disadvantage. We have doubled in size in the last five years, and for the past few years we have been consistently among the top two or three highest-performing trusts in the country for secondary progress. From this position of strength, we believe we have a moral and social duty to take on more schools, and plan to double again in size over the next four or five years, building hubs along the M62 in Liverpool and Manchester.

Is an academy like a business?

No, a business makes a profit for its shareholders. An academy is a charitable trust, which cannot make a profit.

Are academies bound by the same rules and regulations as other schools?

Academies are required to follow the law and guidance on admissions, special educational needs, and exclusions.

Does becoming an academy change the relationship with other local schools and the community?

No, academy funding agreements state that the academy must ensure it is at the heart of its community, collaborating and sharing facilities and expertise with other local schools and the wider community. At Dixons, we work hard to ensure that the school remains at the heart of its community and that it invests in these relationships.

As a free school, will it still work with the local authority?

Academies are independent of the local authority (LA). However, we wish to continue working with the LA, other local schools, and local partners.

How does governance work?

The Dixons Academies Trust has a Board of Trustees who are responsible for the work of the Trust and our academies. However, we devolve as much responsibility as possible to the individual academies. The Board of Trustees is responsible for appointing the majority of the governors on each local governing body (LGB).

Each academy is overseen by an LGB. Some LGBs oversee a single academy, while others oversee two schools in similar circumstances. Each LGB collaborates with the school leadership to check that the academy is making good progress and has parent / carer representatives as well as a staff governor. Our Scheme of Delegation defines the powers and duties of the LGB, which are the same across each of the academies within the Trust.

How will the school be financially accountable?

An academy is governed by the rules and regulations for charitable trusts. For example, we will be required to produce and file annual accounts, and trustees cannot be paid. There will be robust systems with an audit conducted by an external independent auditor.



When will the new school open?

We have had formal approval from the Department for Education to open Dixons Newall Green in temporary accommodation from September 2023.

Will the school be newly built?

Extensive building works will take place on the existing site to ensure that we provide a state-of-the-art space for learning. Temporary accommodation will be in place to house students while building work is completed.

What are the admissions arrangements?

The admission arrangements are:

- There are 140 places in Year 7.
- Offers will be made on 01/03/2023. If we have not entered into a funding agreement with the Secretary of State opening the school by that date, they will be conditional offers and will be confirmed once we have a signed funding agreement. Where the Academy receives more applications than places available, the oversubscription criteria will apply.
- Applications must be made on the Standard or Common Application (SAF / CAF) provided by the local authorities by the stated deadline. For more information visit Manchester local authority's [website](#).

For further details, including oversubscription criteria, please see our draft Admission and Appeals policy for the admission year 2023-24.

School name

What will the school name be?

The new school name will be Dixons Newall Green Academy. It will begin with Dixons to recognise that it belongs to the Dixons family of schools. The second part of the name reflects the community it is part of.

Uniform

Will the school have a uniform?

As with all schools, Dixons Newall Green will have a dress code that all students are expected to follow. There is an emphasis on being clean, tidy and presentable. Our dress code may appear different to other secondary schools in the area, this is because we place emphasis on uniform being practical, affordable and allowing a choice within very clear boundaries. The dress code applies both within school and on the journey to and from school.

For more information on the school dress code, please see our Family Handbook.

Local community

Will the school be involved with the wider local community?

Absolutely, we understand the important part that Dixons Newall Green will play in the local community. The school will endeavour to work closely with families, the LA, charities, universities, colleges, agencies, and other schools. We guarantee that we will do whatever it takes, for as long as it takes, to ensure that every student at Dixons Newall Green acquires the powerful knowledge and positive behaviours they require to achieve their full potential.

General questions

Will the academy follow the National Curriculum?

Yes, but it will also go beyond it. As a Dixons academy, our curriculum will be aligned to a common set of Trust-wide principles that are underpinned by our mission to challenge educational and social disadvantage in the North. We believe all students are entitled to an ambitious, knowledge-rich curriculum that opens doors and maximises their life chances.

Our curriculum will be informed by the latest evidential research from cognitive science about memory, forgetting and practice in order to help students remember more and apply 'the best of what has been thought and said'. By employing our curriculum as a progression model, we will make knowledge stick so that it can be flexibly applied in a variety of different contexts and situations.

What will the times of the school day be and when are the holidays?

At Dixons Newall Green, we will operate a longer working day. With an extended school day, students have more time in the classroom to acquire skills, knowledge and understanding, as well as more opportunities to participate in a wide range of co-curricular electives and activities. There are no shortcuts to success.

All students must arrive at the school by 7.55am at the very latest; some students will be expected to arrive as early as 7.30am for catch-up. All students will finish at 4.05pm on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. All students will finish at 2.20pm on Friday.

Term dates will be shared with families as soon as they are confirmed.



How will Dixons communicate with parents and carers?

As a new school, we will run various open events and opportunities for families to speak with us prior to opening. We will also have a new website which will have a wealth of information for parents.

Once the school has opened, we will run a 13-week curriculum and assessment cycle three times a year, and parents / carers will be updated regularly on the progress and attainment of their child. Parents' evenings are very well attended across the Dixons Academies Trust and reach 100% in some academies where we have followed up with those unable to make it.

We will also build in opportunities for parents / carers to attend school as part of each student's 'Dream Team', and we make more use than most of postcards home, positive telephone calls and, where appropriate, home visits.

We have a social media presence on Twitter and have recently launched a YouTube channel for staff training: Dixons OpenSource (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDVvwEL_gBsnt1cE5kDbSEw).

How will you ensure that the school has good quality teachers?

We have an exciting opportunity to open a brand-new school, with one year group in the first year. Recruitment of high-quality teachers is, therefore, our utmost priority. We were one of the first Teaching Schools to be designated in the country and we also have Research School status. We have vast experience in teacher training and professional development with a view to recruiting, retaining and developing the very best staff. Here is the link to our Teaching Institute (dixonsat.com/teaching-institute), where you can find out more about our work in developing our colleagues.

Will the school be non-selective?

Yes, the school will be non-selective. For further details, please see our Admission and Appeals policy for the admission year 2023-24.

