

## services to academies



As you have hopefully found, academy status can bring exciting opportunities for schools. Our dedicated academies team can support you with the ongoing legal and governance support you will need.

### **Governance**

An important benefit of academy status is the flexibility and autonomy of the governance structure and we are well placed to help the governors take best advantage of this. Drawing on our leading academies and corporate expertise, we can guide the governors through structural issues and can produce corporate frameworks tailored to meet an academy's individual needs – whether that simply entails helping the academy establish a governance hierarchy or putting in place a number of special purpose shared service vehicles.

As a full service law firm, once instructed we are able to help with other issues that may arise when the academy is up and running. For example, we recently successfully defended an academy in a claim for judicial review brought against it by a former pupil who had been excluded.

### **Employment**

Academies need reliable and practical advice to guide them through the complex legal human resources minefield. Our team of 30 employment lawyers who work with the wider education sector has vast experience in advising on challenges faced by academies, including TUPE issues, streamlining employment processes and resources, changing terms and conditions and equal pay. Our employment team also has experience within NHS trusts, local authorities and commercial businesses, so we are familiar with the organisations with whom academies may contract and from whom academies may inherit staff, enabling us to add value and efficiency.

We provide training on all aspects of employment law. Our practical and interactive sessions on redundancy and performance management are currently most popular with education institutions.

### **Freedom of information**

Academies need to be aware of how they should store and manage their data under the Data Protection Act and Freedom of Information Act. We can help you with this on-going requirement.

In addition, we provide training to academies on the Freedom of Information Act, raising awareness of this important legislation and its impact on the day to day management and broader governance of academies. We have advised academies on managing a request made under the Act.

### **Property portfolio management**

We can advise academies on the on-going management of their land and buildings, including matters such as landlord and tenant law, leases, licences, development agreements and shared use/community use agreements.

In addition, we can offer our online web-based real estate terrier. This allows deeds and plans to be scanned and stored in electronic format. Other management information can also be entered, such as planning information, site and floor areas, rateable value and the VAT status of the property. This means that all of your current property details will be available on your own PC screen – no need to spend time searching through deeds packets for particular documents (or asking your solicitors or agents to do so). We would be delighted to discuss making this available to you on preferential terms.

### **Company secretarial services**

We can assist with all your company formation requirements including private, public or guarantee companies, limited liability partnerships, residents' management companies and tailor made charitable companies. Entities can be incorporated on a same day basis using our electronic incorporation software.

## SEN

In addition to advising you on the necessary steps to ensure continued compliance with laws and regulations (including disability discrimination obligations), we can provide you with tailored advice to ensure that a clear and effective division of ongoing responsibility is achieved between the local authority and the academy for pupils with SEN. We will work with you to identify the funding available, the services you are required to provide and the objectives to be met to ensure that you are able to meet the needs of both current and prospective SEN pupils.

## Admissions

The admissions process of academies is governed by the Schools Admissions Code, local authority co-ordinated admissions policies, and additional constraints introduced by academy funding arrangements. Relying on the diverse expertise within our team, we are happy to advise on a range of issues from general admissions policies to the procedure for applying to expand pupil numbers.

## Exclusions

While required to follow the law and guidance on exclusions as it applies to maintained schools, we are aware of the additional obligations and opportunities provided to academies and can advise on these accordingly. For instance, discussing with you the establishment and running of an independent appeals panel.

## Expertise

You can also see from the map on the right, the breadth of our academies experience spans the entire country.

Our wider education group acts for over 120 education institutions across the UK, including universities, colleges and schools. Each year, around 40 of our partners and 140 of our lawyers from our specialist teams are engaged in the latest real estate, commercial and governance projects in the sector. We harness our experience and connections in other sectors: charities, banking, business, health, local authorities and insurance.

The leading independent legal directories have noted that we have "a grasp of education law that is second to none".

*"It has been comforting to know that the team at Mills & Reeve were on top of the brief and giving us clear advice"*

*"Your colleagues have been excellent in their support for the project."*

## Contact us

If you are interested in finding out more about our services to academies, we offer a **free initial telephone helpline** of up to 15 minutes.

We understand the pressures and budgetary constraints in the wider education sector so where possible and for costs certainty we will seek to provide a **fixed fee**.

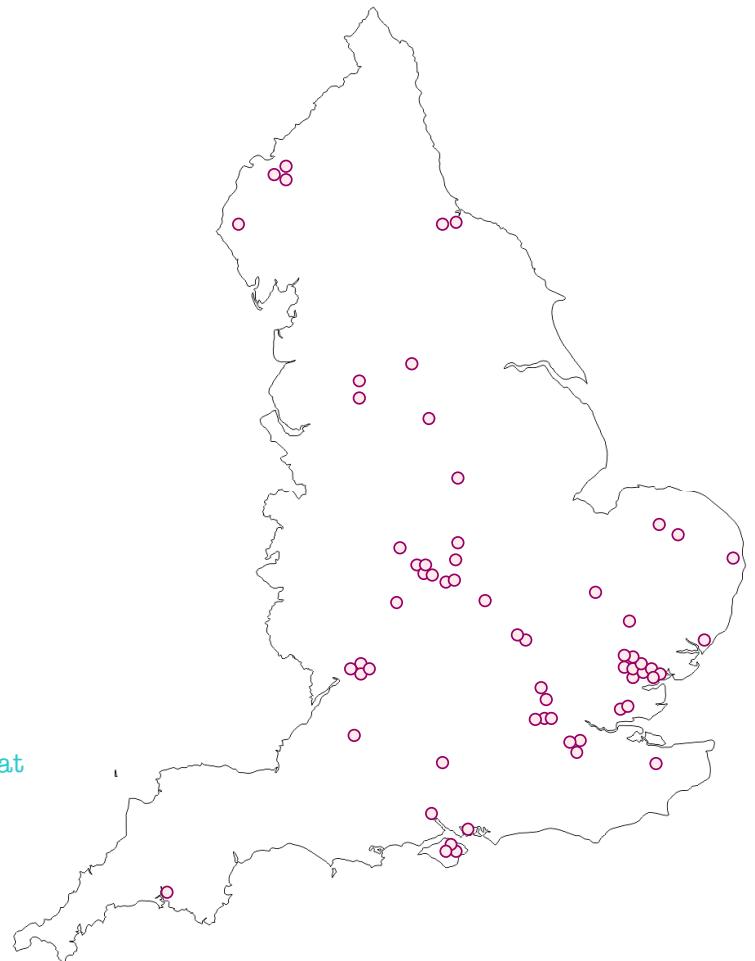
If you would like to find out more about our services to academies, please get in touch:



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