

Steiner Free Schools: Frequently Asked Questions

Please note that we are in a period of policy development, the answers below represent our best understanding at this point.

1. What is a Free School?

An independent state funded school.

2. What is the difference between a Free School and an Academy?

Once established a Free School is an Academy. The term Free School refers to how the school is set up.

3. Will all teachers in Free Schools require QTS?

No. All teachers will need to be graduates with Steiner training. We hope to develop a Steiner route to QTS for new teachers in the future. Instructors who are not graduates can also be employed. Schools decide their own pay scales.

4. Testing

a. Which subjects are to be tested?

- i. English and Maths at 11.
- ii. There will also be a requirement for 16 year olds to take 5 GCSEs.

b. Will tests be based on the national curriculum or the Steiner curriculum?

- i. Exact nature of the 11 year old assessment not yet known.

c. What about the six year old reading test?

We understand that Steiner schools will be able to be exempted from this.

2. Curriculum - will we able to deliver the Steiner Curriculum?

- a. Yes.

3. Principal/Head of School

- a. Is this still a requirement? Yes
- b. What role must this person play? They are legally accountable to the Board of Governors.
- c. Is there some flexibility to enable us to continue to operate along collegiate lines? Yes. There is a requirement that the school has strong and effective leadership, but how that is delivered is up to individual schools.

4. Staffing Structure - collegiate working - can we stick with this?

- a. Yes.

5. Money

- a. Where does the money come from? Central government.
- b. Capital and Income. How much funding is on offer towards the costs of the free school? Is the funding determined on a per pupil basis e.g. £6k per pupil? Per pupil funding will be on the same basis as other state schools in the area. As Academies Free Schools will receive approximately 10% on top

of the per pupil funding, which is money that the local authority retains for the schools which it runs. Funding for rent will be on top of this.

- c. How long does the contract last? When can they change the funding/educational/pedagogical requirements? We expect contracts to be for 7 years.
- d. Would there be capital funding for building upgrades? Free Schools can bid for capital funding. Cost effective projects are most likely to be successful.

6. Can future governments change this policy?

Future governments can indeed change policies. They cannot break contracts. Currently the policy which allows groups of private individuals to start Free Schools is not supported by the Labour Party. However the continued existence of Academies has cross party support.

7. Approval

Who approves the application to become a free school? The Secretary of State for Education.

8. How much influence does the Local Authority have re approval? The LEA will be consulted on their view but have no veto. Obtaining their support is nonetheless desirable.

9. Admissions - what control will schools have over their admissions?

Oversubscribed schools will need to abide by the Schools Admissions Code. This gives priority to children with a Statement of Special Needs, followed by Looked After children. Schools can then decide and usually give priority to siblings followed by proximity to school. At Hereford it has been agreed that being on the school register can have a higher priority than proximity, which means that the places of kindergarten children who are already at the school are not threatened by children age rising 5 (which is the age at which the admissions code starts) moving closer to the school. Teachers children can have places even when the school is full.

10. How will the Ofsted (SIS) inspection change?

We understand that there is a recognition on the part of the government that the inspection regime will need to be adapted to take account of the diversity of curriculum which the new policy allows.

11. If we become a free school, what happens to the existing building/assets? Can the charity still own them and rent them out to the free school? Yes.

12. How can we become a Free School?

The application form can be downloaded from the Department of Education website. Guidance on how to complete your application is available from the New Schools Network.

For more information please see

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/freeschools>

and <http://newschoolsnetwork.org/>

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