

SIMS

# Advice for academies

January 2011



# SIMS and academies – working together for success

When a school makes the decision to move to academy status, there are a lot of factors to consider, including the management information system and finance system it chooses to use. Capita is committed to ensuring that the 21,000 schools and academies using SIMS and FMS as their preferred solution each day get the most out of their MIS.

With over 22 years experience of working in partnership with schools and academies, Capita is uniquely placed to understand exactly what academies want and can deliver training and consultancy to help you focus on what really matters. Our dedicated consultants are experts in helping academies achieve the best possible outcomes.

Your relationship changes with Capita when you become an academy and certain licensing procedures need to be followed. This might be the first time you work with us directly – this document explains the changes you need to consider and how we can support you every step of the way.

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## Academy Types

The DfE's definition is: 'Academies are publicly funded independent schools that provide a first-class education.' Each Academy is a new legal entity, but isn't always issued with a new DfE number.

There are two types of academy:

- **Phase 1 academies** – schools that started the process of converting to an academy as a result of failing status. Phase 1 academies are always issued with a new establishment (DfE) number.
- **Phase 2 academies** – schools that started the process of converting to academy status under the coalition government's scheme. All schools now have the opportunity to apply for academy status, the initial focus is on those who have 'Outstanding' status. Individual schools becoming a Phase 2 academy retain their current school establishment (DfE) number. New academies (with no previous establishment number) and multiple schools becoming a single Phase 2 academy will be issued with a new establishment (DfE) number.

## What are your SIMS software licensing options?

An Academy needs to have purchased a licence for SIMS in its own right, therefore depending on your current licence one of the following options will apply to your school:

- **Schools using SIMS under Local Authority licence agreement:** As academies are not under local authority control, they are not covered under the terms of the local authority licence. If your school is using SIMS under a local authority agreement, you will need to purchase a licence in your own right directly from Capita. SIMS Direct is the name given to schools and academies purchasing their licences from Capita.
- **SIMS Direct schools:** If you are currently a SIMS Direct school and have purchased your licence directly from Capita, then you can transfer this licence to the new institution. The fee for this is £200 and requires proof of purchase to be presented.
- **Schools using alternative MIS:** Schools who don't currently use SIMS, but wish to migrate to it when they become an academy will be required to purchase licences directly from Capita and will become a SIMS Direct customer.

All SIMS Direct customers pay annual entitlement charges directly to Capita. These are charged per annum and provide software enhancements, updates via SOLUS (SIMS Online Update Service), basic support of the software (both via Capita's Service Desk and through SupportNet) and attendance at the SIMS Direct seminars.

## How to transfer your data and Access Historical Pupil Data

There are currently three options available for the migration or use of historical pupil data (which will be dependent on whether you have been issued with a new DfE number). These are:

Type of Academy	SIMS Solution	Benefits	Implications
Phase 1 Academies issued with new DfE number.  New academies  Multiple schools becoming a single Phase 2 academy.	New SIMS database.  Old school/s database kept for reference on standalone PC or virtual environment.	Allows an academy to have a completely fresh start, for example all behaviour issues “written off”.  The easiest solution for multiple schools.	There is a cost for data migration to the new database and for installation. Capita is also able to provide assistance with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• setting up the academy structure</li> <li>• entering staff details</li> <li>• transferring the appropriate student and assessment data into the new database</li> <li>• merging multiple source school databases into one database for the new academy.</li> </ul> Some historical data will be lost (e.g. lesson by lesson attendance – this can be accessed on SIMS reference database).
Phase 1 Academies issued with new DfE number.	Use existing SIMS database. Site specific patch for changing DfE number.	No loss of historical data so it is possible to see year on year improvements very easily.	New URN will need to be entered in SIMS.  Site specific patch needed to change DfE number – request patch from Service Desk (see below for further details).  Relevant utility needed to change the pupil date of admission (SupportNet resource number 17281).  SIMS Assessment and Profiles will be affected - results and result description tags will need to be manually removed and reinserted.  The Date of Admission (DOA) for pupils needs adjusting to reflect the Academy’s opening date.
Phase 2 Academies keeping DfE number	Use existing SIMS database	The date of admission of pupils does not need to be changed.  You will not lose any historical data so it is possible to see year on year improvements very easily.	The new URN you are issued with needs to be entered in SIMS.

Any type of academy (whether Phase 1 or 2) will involve staff being issued with a new contract. Therefore the previous school contracts or any absences from the school, must not appear in the School Workforce Census.

If an Academy opts to use a new SIMS database, Capita's recommendation is for the academy to keep the old school/s' database for reference. This can be achieved through a virtualised environment or on a standalone computer, which will allow staff to access the previous data but there is no link to the live SIMS environment. It is recommended that the old database is upgraded along with the new database, so that, if necessary, the academy can still receive support from Capita on the current/two previous releases. This option also ensures there is no compromising of future statutory returns.

#### **How to request the Site Specific Patch for a DfE number change:**

To request the patch, we will need you to log a case with the Service Desk, asking for the patch to be created. At the time of logging the case, you will need to provide the following details: school LA and DfE number, new academy LA and DfE number, and the technical contact of who the patch should be emailed to once complete. Capita also require a full backup of the SIMS database (as current as possible), which is used for testing purposes only (the patch will not be applied to this dataset). Please be aware when loading this onto the SFTP site, the data must also reference the case reference number. For using Capita's SFTP site, please refer to the specific documentation which can be found on SupportNet.

Once the above has been carried out and we have received the data, it is a five day turnaround for creating and testing. The Service Desk will then email the patch back to you so you can apply against the SIMS database.

**Please speak to your SIMS Account Manager if you would like some advice on the best option for you.**

## Advice for FMS customers

The SIMS FMS solution is well suited to meet the challenges of financial management and reporting for academies and to support auditors in examining and monitoring academy finances. FMS has undergone enhancements to suit the needs of supporting the financial management of academies. Baxter & Co are a well known accountancy firm who support Academies in their auditing processes and acknowledge FMS as one of the market leaders.

Many academies successfully use FMS to generate salary projections from Personnel 7 within SIMS. The key advantage of using FMS and Personnel 7 is that Personnel 7 is School Workforce Census compliant. Academies can choose to enter their supplier and debtor details in from afresh, which some have chosen to do from a data cleansing perspective, or alternatively Capita offers a chargeable service, where we transfer this data into the new academy database.

FMS already provides all of the accounting features that are required to run academies. From the Spring 2011 Release, FMS will enhance its feature set by allowing Non-Recoverable VAT to be recharged to departments automatically, including commitments.\* This means that FMS will be able to offer key functionality for academies that can only be matched by very 'high-end' finance systems that cost many thousands of pounds.

Academies are able to import report templates reducing the need for training in how to generate the academy financial reports. The report templates available include:

- Four Monitoring Reports – Indicative Budget, Final Budget, Mid-Year Budget Review and Year Provisional Outturn Statement.
- Three Year End Reports – Income and Expenditure Account, Balance Sheet, Supplementary Detailed Income and Expenditure Account.

### **Do I need a new FMS database?**

We recommend that a new FMS database is installed as there may be implications for support for the old database. As well as a new installation, a suitable structure needs to be built within it. There is a cost involved for providing this service.

We suggest that the old school's FMS database is kept for reference. This can be done as a virtualised environment or on a standalone computer so the academy can still access the previous data but it is not linked to the live FMS environment. The old database should be upgraded along with the new database so that, if necessary, the academy can still receive support from Capita on the current release and up to two previous releases.

**Please see the document 'How FMS meets Academies requirements' for further details. (SupportNet Resource Number 17205).**

At the time of publication, draft legislation has been proposed that will change academies needs regarding VAT. This document will be updated once the proposed legislation is passed.

## How we can support you

In addition to the support provided in your annual entitlement, we offer many extended services to support your transition to an academy. Of course, you are free to choose where you purchase your support from and you may wish to purchase support from your own or another local authority. In the last year, we worked with over 90 academies and we feel we are well placed to support your transition. Some of the ways we can help are listed below:

- **SIMS software support:** this is provided directly from Capita and basic support is included within the annual entitlement charges. This includes a comprehensive web support solution and telephone support from an experienced and dedicated support team, on all elements of SIMS.
- **Additional software and technical support from Capita:** Capita knows all academy support requirements are different, depending on whether you require support for the whole of your network or just someone on hand to support your technicians and SIMS users. We have various packages available designed to give you real confidence with local expertise through remote or onsite help. Our support packages include:
  - Full ICT technical support from experienced staff for the Management Information System (MIS), including the curriculum and administration systems, SIMS, the network, and technical consultation visits.
  - Dedicated Customer Service Manager partnering with you to help develop a three year strategic plan.
  - Support packages for academies that have large in-house support groups and confident SIMS users looking to give their team's additional support.
  - Additional support packages also provide a discount on Capita training.
- **Onsite consultancy and training:** All of Capita's courses are scheduled as part of our national professional development programme for academies and are also offered as onsite consultancy. Packages developed specifically for academies are available, covering both product training and strategic planning, tailored to an academy's specific needs. We provide courses developed for the senior leadership team, all of which are delivered by an experienced Capita academy consultant. Areas of focus include:
  - the introduction of new academy processes and procedures which are supported by SIMS
  - the development of improvement strategies making use of data held within the SIMS system
  - targeted support for senior leaders and classroom teachers who wish to make more effective use of the data in SIMS
  - the implementation of new software features
  - support for new members of staff and staff taking on new roles and responsibilities.

Capita consultants have an extensive knowledge of the SIMS system and how it can be used to support whole school improvement processes. Our team includes many former teachers, headteachers, administration and school technical staff, who are experienced in providing the training, consultancy and support relevant and tailored to the specific requirements of an individual academy.

- **Local authority and Third Party Support:** Where a school currently benefits from a good support service from the Local Authority or Third Party Company, Capita encourages this to continue. Becoming an Academy means you have greater freedom to choose support you need. Most Local Authorities are supporting their schools' journey through becoming an Academy and beyond, and accordingly you may wish to continue to use your local SIMS support team. To take advantage of the experience it offers. However, if you are unable to use your Local Authority team, Capita are happy to work directly with you, giving you the flexibility you need. Any payments already made by the Local Authority for Annual Entitlement up until 31st March 2011 can be reclaimed by the Local Authority and whereby an Academy opts for a Local Authority team support, Capita will pay the team 20% of the Annual Entitlement charges.

## Further information and support

Please visit our websites to find out more about the software and services we offer and to read about how other schools and academies are making improvements with SIMS.

SIMS website: [www.sims.co.uk](http://www.sims.co.uk)  
SIMS Support: <http://support.capitaes.co.uk/>  
Training and consultancy: [www.sims.co.uk/training](http://www.sims.co.uk/training)  
Case studies: [www.sims.co.uk/casestudies](http://www.sims.co.uk/casestudies)  
Achievement magazine: [www.sims.co.uk/achievement](http://www.sims.co.uk/achievement)

**To speak to one of our consultants about your needs please contact your SIMS Account Manager or our sales desk on: 01234 832100.**

# CAPITA

Capita, Franklin Court,  
Priory Business Park,  
Cardington, Bedford MK44 3JZ  
Tel : 01234 832100 Fax : 01234 838091  
[www.capita-cs.co.uk](http://www.capita-cs.co.uk)