



DUNNINGTON C.E. PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Headteacher: Caroline Hancy

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20th October 2016

Dear Parent/Carer,

Consultation on Conversion to Academy Status for Dunnington CE Primary School and the Establishment of a South York Multi-Academy Trust

Dunnington CE Primary School is a happy and hard-working school where there is harmony and a relentless commitment to continual improvement. Our success is supported by our strong partnerships with other local primary and secondary schools with whom we strive to provide the highest standards of education and support for all of the children in our care. We are now seeking to establish a South York Schools Multi -Academy Trust to formalise our existing collaboration and to ensure we can work together, both now and in the future, in the best interests of those in our school community.

Following extensive discussions within our governing body and with our partner cluster schools, we are now launching a formal consultation with stakeholders on our plans for academy conversion.

These plans will involve Dunnington CE Primary School converting to academy status and entering into a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) with a number of schools drawn from the existing South York Schools Partnership and some of Fulford School's other feeder primary schools.

The schools involved in this consultation are - Fulford School, Archbishop of York CE Primary School, Dunnington CE Primary School, Elvington CE Primary School, Escrick CE Primary School, Lord Deramore's Primary School, Naburn CE Primary School, St Oswald's CE Primary School and Wheldrake with Thorganby CE Primary School.

The establishment of this MAT will formalise and build upon many years of collaborative cluster working.

The following information sets out the national and local context and gives details of MAT operation, in addition to outlining the specific, and very real, benefits the establishment of a MAT will provide for our school and our partners.

Whilst we acknowledge that academy conversion has never been our desired outcome, we fully recognise the combination of the threats and opportunities we face, both within a national and local context, which now make academy conversion the most appropriate course of action to advance and protect the interests of our school and to further improve the outcomes and support for those within our community.

The size and membership of this Multi-Academy Trust will develop over time. We believe this move will create a unique family of schools that will be defined by shared values and that will maximise the outcomes, support and opportunities available for all those within our community, both now and in the future.

The Trust will reflect our shared commitment to develop confident, tolerant and caring young people who can flourish as healthy and responsible adults with creative, enquiring minds, and with the skills and knowledge to make a positive contribution to society. Our collaboration with other schools within the Trust will enable us to further develop the strength of our learning communities and to inspire a love of learning. We will aim to achieve continued excellence through collaboration and a shared approach to continuous improvement.

The strength of our schools and of our partnership working means we are confident that we have the vision, skill, talent and resources to serve the best interests of our wider community and to shape our own destiny. Working together in a Multi-Academy Trust will enable our partnership to make a distinctive contribution to school improvement and to educational provision both within our MAT but also within and beyond the confines of the city.

Over 65% of secondary schools and an increasing number of primary schools nationally now have academy status. Although York has been unrepresentative of this national picture this situation is rapidly changing now with a growing number of academy conversions and MATs being planned. This change in school status, nationally and locally, is combined with Local Authorities losing their role in school improvement and with a sharp decline in the support available to schools through the Local Authority.

This context, in addition to the rapid pace of educational reform and pressures on school funding, creates both a need and an opportunity for schools to work together to provide school to school support and to facilitate school improvement. Establishing a MAT would provide a clear structure and mechanism for our schools to work together and to build upon our existing strengths. We wish to act now to define our own MAT, to base this on our own values and approaches and to control our own direction of travel both now and in the future.

Our reasons for seeking academy status and the establishment of a MAT are summarised below:

- To develop the shared vision and values of our partnership working
- To deepen our collaboration to secure the best outcomes for all of our children
- To create a real family of schools and to develop a 'through school' framework
- To work together to improve teaching and learning and to develop our shared curriculum
- To enable our school leadership to focus more on teaching and learning and whole school improvement by reducing the administrative burden on individual schools on issues such as policy development and procurement
- To provide effective school to school support by sharing best practice
- To enhance school improvement within our partnership
- To pool resources, services and support to ensure the best outcomes for all in our community
- To respect, maintain and develop each school's individual culture, values, ethos and identity.
- To improve recruitment, retention, CPD and succession planning
- To achieve economies of scale and to improve value for money
- To shape our own destiny within a changing school system

The information in this document and the FAQ sheet provides a summary of the important points relating to our proposed academy conversion. We would very much like to hear your views. You can respond by completing and returning the reply form in this document, by attending the consultation meeting or by emailing your response to dunnington.primary@york.gov.uk.

The consultation meeting will be held on Wednesday 9th November at 6pm. Any information or Powerpoint slides used at this event will be shared on our website for those who are unable to attend. We will also hold an informal drop-in session on Friday 11th November at 9:15am.

We will seek to respond to any common questions that emerge during the consultation process which are not covered in this document. There may, however, be information that will not be available to the school or that will relate to decisions that will be made at a later date that we are not able to provide at this point. We will also update our website with responses to frequently asked questions and points that are raised during the consultation so please do keep checking the website.

Please note the closing date for submissions is 3.30pm on Friday 25th November 2016.

Feedback from the consultation will be reviewed by the Full Governing Body in December when they will decide on whether to proceed with the application for academy status.

If this proposal is agreed, all schools seeking to apply to convert to academy status and to join the MAT will then work together to shape and agree the MAT structure and its operational arrangements.

Dunnington CE Primary School hope to be in the first phase of the conversion with a small number of partner schools. The remaining schools seeking to join the MAT would then do so on a phased basis. The timings and phased nature of the development of the MAT will be agreed through further discussion between the schools and the Regional Schools Commissioner.

We believe this course of action offers an exciting opportunity for our school community and that it is one which will bring real benefits to all its members. Our support for this plan follows lengthy deliberation and considerable research. It reflects our long-standing desire to formalise and further embed the unique benefits of our partnership working in order to get the best outcomes for the students in our care.

Yours faithfully,



Mr Simon Parkinson
Chair of Governors



Mrs Caroline Hancy
Headteacher

Response Form – Academy Consultation

Comments:

Please return to (Please mark the envelope as “Academy Consultation”):

Dunnington CE Primary School
Pear Tree Lane
Dunnington
York
YO19 5QG

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers - Academy Conversion

What is an academy?

Academies are publicly funded schools that are not managed by a local authority. Their independence means that they have more flexibility in some areas of decision making than local authority maintained schools. They still have the same duty as local authority maintained schools to provide free education for local children and are subject to the same laws, regulations and codes when it comes to admissions, exclusions and SEN provision. Where several academies combine together to create a formal legal structure this is known as a multi-academy trust or MAT for short.

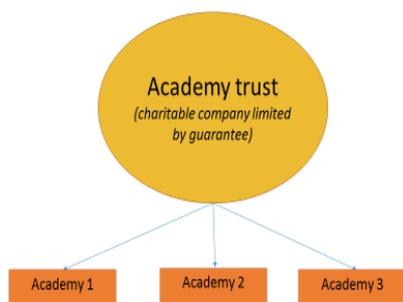
Who would be involved in the MAT?

The membership of our MAT and the pace of its growth will be determined by decisions taken in individual schools relating to academy conversion. In addition to this, any school seeking to convert and to join the proposed MAT would need the agreement of the MAT board and of the Regional Schools Commissioner. At present we are in discussion with a number of local primary schools and schools within our existing South York Partnership in relation to potential MAT membership.

What does a MAT look like?

The broad structure of a Multi- Academy Trust is shown underneath.

Academy trust: a visual representation



How does the conversion process work?

Once a decision is taken to convert to academy status, the school must then go through a detailed application process with the eventual conversion being subject to the approval of the Regional Schools Commissioner.

Schools can withdraw from the application and conversion process right up until the signing of the funding agreement.

How would Community and Church schools work together in a MAT?

Schools which join the Trust would retain their original character with Church of England schools becoming Church of England academies while community schools would retain their own status. The religious aspects of Church of England school governance would not affect community schools within the Trust. The terms of the Trust would ensure that the distinctive character of each school is preserved while the benefits of working together are maximised.

How would the Multi -Academy Learning Trust be run?

The MAT would be a charitable company limited by guarantee with members who appoint the board of directors/governors/trustees who run the Trust. Each of the academies within the Trust would have its own local governing body. This would enable all academies to have the greatest possible autonomy whilst developing a collaborative framework. Each academy would retain its own head and local governing body. The experience and commitment of our schools' existing governors would be highly valued and as many as possible would transfer to the new structure.

What would the relationship be between the MAT and the LA?

Academies are not maintained by the LA, but our schools would continue to be part of the city-wide provision for the children of York. Our schools would be committed to preserving their partnership with the LA and other schools and academies across the city. We believe, however, that as the role of the LA changes and its capacity to support schools diminishes, our schools would benefit enormously from belonging to a MAT which would provide some services in-house and where resources could be procured and provided more cost efficiently. We need to maximise the funding that goes directly to benefiting children in the classroom.

Who would the MAT be accountable to?

Elements of academy performance would still be accountable to the LA. The academy would also be accountable to OFSTED, the DfE, the Educational Funding Agency and the Regional Schools Commissioner.

What would be the timescale for conversion to a MAT?

A decision on conversion will be taken this academic term. Approval at this stage would start the application process. The length of the conversion process is largely determined by the time taken to complete this and to gain approval from the Regional Schools Commissioner. Our aim would be to achieve the initial conversions to academy status and to establish the MAT by September 2017.

A small number of schools, including Fulford School, would take part in the initial conversion to form the MAT. MAT membership would then develop via a phased expansion over a period of years to include all partner schools seeking to join the MAT. Given all schools committing to join our MAT at the point of this consultation will be involved in discussions on its establishment and operation, those agreeing to join at this early stage but not joining until a later date, will still very much shape the formation of the MAT.

What will happen if we don't decide to convert to a MAT?

The information given outlines the benefits the school would gain through academy conversion and the establishment of a MAT. These benefits would not be fully realised without conversion and entering into a MAT.

Given the pace and scale of local conversions it is possible that the school would be forced to convert if a 'tipping point' was reached in the LA that meant it was deemed unable to sustain the remaining number of maintained schools.

What would happen to the admission arrangements for our schools?

The academy trust would become the admissions authority for admissions purposes and would be responsible for determining the admissions policy. However, our school would continue to be inclusive and to serve their local communities by admitting local children on the same basis as they do now.

What would happen to our funding and assets?

Academy funding is now calculated on a broad like-for-like basis with LA schools. In the light of this, our academies would have a similar budget compared to our current funding.

Would the schools need to change their name and uniform?

We believe that schools joining any MAT we establish should retain the essence of what makes them unique. We would plan to retain our names or change these as little as possible. The uniform for individual schools would be unchanged.

Would the terms and conditions of employment for staff change?

The academy trust would be the employer of staff. This includes not just those who work “across the trust” but also the staff working in the individual academies. Staff contracts would automatically transfer from the local authority/maintained school governing body to the academy trust at conversion under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (TUPE). As part of TUPE arrangements, all staff are entitled to transfer to the Trust under the same employment terms and conditions. Once the academies have been established, any changes to terms and conditions would be subject to consultation with staff and Trade Unions as they are now.

Would the Academy offer the same curriculum as the current school?

We will, as we do now, continue to provide a broad, balanced, creative and enriching curriculum that meets the needs of all our students and fulfils all statutory requirements.

Would our Headteachers remain with the Academies?

The values, skills, experience and commitment of our Headteachers would continue to be utilised in their individual schools. The Trust would, however, provide a way of strengthening the leadership of our schools by sharing expertise and freeing our senior leaders to focus on teaching and learning.