



Academy Proposal

Drop In Session
16th May 2017

Sacred Heart Primary School

Some schools have been obliged to become academies as a result of a poor Ofsted (ie. Special Measures).

Sacred Heart Primary School is certainly not in that position. We received a '**Good**' Ofsted on the 8th March 2017 and an '**Outstanding**' Diocesan inspection on the 23rd & 24th March 2017. Schools in our position may 'convert' to become an academy.

Sacred Heart Partnership of Schools

Headteacher and Governors have recently been considering whether to join what will become a newly formed **Sacred Heart Partnership of Schools**, which will consist of Sacred Heart High School and St. Michael's Primary School, Elswick and potentially ourselves, Sacred Heart Primary School, if we choose to convert to academy status.

What is the proposal for Sacred Heart Primary School?

- The proposal is that Sacred Heart Primary School joins the Partnership as a 'converter' school. A converter academy is a high-performing school which has opted out of Local Authority control. Currently the LA takes a proportion of the school's budget to pay for LA services. This money would come direct to the school for us to determine how it is spent.

How will the Partnership schools work together?

- All schools in the partnership will work together to improve outcomes for children across the partnership.
- Sacred Heart High School is an outstanding teaching school and will work closely with both primary schools.
- Sacred Heart Primary School, will work to support St. Michael's Primary School, following their recent Ofsted rating of 'inadequate'

This support will enable teachers to learn from each other in a variety of ways, sharing CPD (Continued Professional Development) ideas and good practice. There will be opportunities across the partnership for teachers to make links, plan joint projects and learn from each other.

What is an academy?

- Academies are publicly funded schools, independent of the local authority, held accountable through a legally binding funding agreement with the Department for Education.
- Staff are employed by the academy partnership trust. Academies have more control over curriculum and staff pay and conditions.
- Sacred Heart Primary School is currently a Voluntary Aided School, under diocesan control but responsible for employing our staff and setting admissions. Our land and buildings are owned by the diocese.

What is a Multi-Academy Trust?

- Multi-academy trusts are groups of academies that have come together to form a charitable company, with a single group of 'members' who have an overview of the governance arrangements and a single board of trustees or directors. In this case Sacred Heart High School is converting from a single academy to a multi academy trust and will be called the Sacred Heart Partnership of Schools.
- The Partnership assumes responsibility for maintaining school grounds to a high standard, as well as the prudent financial management and funding for the school.

Why join the Sacred Heart Partnership?

- The unique history and heritage of both Sacred Heart Schools, which were originally founded by the Society of the Sacred Heart, ran by the sisters of the society RSCJ, shapes and directs the ethos and values of both schools to strive **to reveal the love of the heart of Jesus**.
- The Sacred Heart goals of Faith, Community, Intellect, Personal Growth and Social awareness, which we adhere to today, underpin our shared mission as Sacred Heart Schools.
- We aim to strengthen the close partnership we already have with other schools in the Sacred Heart Network and see Sacred Heart High School a natural local partner.
- The Sacred Heart the Partnership will have a very sympathetic approach to our needs as a sister school.

Do we lose control over our school?

- No. We will retain our unique identity and decision making options with regard to how we run our school and what we teach. We agree partnership arrangements over school budget, funding and improvements to school buildings. We receive our budget from the Partnership instead of the LA. We retain a governing body but in work together with Partnership Governance.
- The Headteacher and Governors retain high input into priority decisions. The governors are confident that there will be no detrimental effect on the running of the school. The Sacred Heart Partnership of Schools will be a small local partnership the Trustees live locally and want to respond effectively the needs of the young people in our schools.
- Sacred Heart Primary School will maintain its unique ethos and character whilst working in close partnership with the trust and the other schools within the Partnership, as well as maintaining its current relationships and partnership within the Catholic cluster of Newcastle primary schools.

What do we gain from joining this Partnership?

- A local network of committed and knowledgeable partners all working together in the sole interests of our children; a vast reservoir of experience and support, again from a local source who know our catchment area and our local issues.
- Sacred Heart High School is an outstanding teaching school and SCITT (School Centred Initial Teacher Training) provider which can support us to continue to raise standards in the future. The school gains in terms of local support in ICT as well as other areas.
- The school assures a secure and stable future in local partnership; we gain enhanced financial support and funding; we gain many advantages and benefits in terms of staff sharing expertise and collaboration, making the links between primary and secondary seamless.
- The school and the Partnership are highly accountable to both the Department for Education and Ofsted who ensure that each school is performing well. As part of a partnership the school would save money through shared services such as ICT, site and Human Resources.

Why can't we just stay as we are?

- The pressure to convert, from the diocese or Government, is not immediate; however if we do not make our own choices now and lead the way in setting up partnerships of our choice, we may ultimately be in a position where the choice is made for us.

Will there have to be a new uniform?

- There is no need to change our current uniform. Some academies locally may have done so, but this has particularly been to establish a 'fresh start' ethos.

Will there be any changes to the school day?

- There is no need to change our current timings.

When do you propose to make these changes?

- Consultations to take place this term, legal procedures to take effect next term (autumn), together with detailed planning with the Partnership.

How will the school be accountable as an Academy?

- An academy is governed by company law as a charitable trust. The Academy Trust Board will work with the school to monitor the school's performance.
- The Partnership Trust will intervene if results fall below their floor targets or below an Ofsted category of 'Good' and provide additional support.

Will our Admissions policy change?

- No change in policy or numbers. Our catchment area remains unchanged.

Will the curriculum change?

- No change. The school has wholeheartedly embraced the new National Curriculum. Both children and staff enjoy the flexibility it offers.

Will there be any change to Special Educational Needs?

- No change. Pupils will be assessed early and will have access to appropriate support to match their individual needs as they do now.

Will there be any changes to school meals?

- No change. And free school meals arrangements remain the same.

Will the LA have any involvement the school?

- The Local Authority will continue to provide its core statutory responsibilities of strategic planning and sufficiency of school places and provision, admissions and attendance, the early years, finance, behaviour, safeguarding, special educational needs and some aspects of the curriculum and assessment.

Does becoming an Academy mean that there will be more funds available for teaching staff and extra- curricular activities?

- The school is likely to receive a net increase in available funds as an Academy. It would be the decision of the Partnership and local governing body how this money is best spent to enhance the education provided.

How would the school buildings be maintained and funded?

- Should any major work be required to the school building, the school would work directly with the Partnership for financial support.

How strong is the voice of the parents going to be if we are an Academy?

- The Partnership believes that working in collaboration with parents is essential to support the achievement and well-being of children. The Partnership is therefore committed to putting in place processes for parental involvement.

Who will be responsible for meeting the cost of changing to an Academy?

- The cost of implementation is met by the Government, school will receive appropriate converter funding (£25,000) to be used for this purpose. The Partnership has an experienced team to manage the implementation.

If I work in the Academy, will conditions change when the Partnership becomes our employer?

- Employees automatically transfer from the employment by the 'old school' / Local Authority to the new Academy, under The Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (TUPE). However, for PAYE purposes, HM Revenue & Customs treat the new Academy as a new entity, and therefore a new payroll scheme has to be established with them. This can also mean that all employees receive a P45 from the old payroll scheme, when they become a 'new employee' of the new payroll scheme.

Can you guarantee that teaching and non-teaching staff terms and conditions, pay, pensions, occupational health etc. will remain as good as is now provided by the Local Authority?

- As before, the school needs to recruit and retain excellent staff. We believe that this will be achieved by paying staff at the national rates, providing them with excellent conditions of service and being considerate of their well-being through the services we provide for them. However, new staff could be appointed under different terms and conditions, if the Partnership feels it is in the best interests of the academy.

Are staff pensions going to be affected negatively?

- The Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS) is a National Scheme which implemented across all types of schools; this will remain unchanged under academy status. Non-teaching staff are likely to belong to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). Academies are separate scheme employers under the LGPS.
- Existing staff who are already members of the TPS or LGPS will not be affected by the conversion. After conversion, new staff will be eligible to join the TPS or LGPS and be automatically enrolled in the scheme when employed, but would be able to opt out of the scheme if he or she gave notice within three months.

The Diocese View

- The Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle have consulted every school in on academy conversion and the formation of Multi Academy Trusts. The diocese have now given us permission to begin a formal consultation process to convert to academy status and join the Sacred Heart Partnership

The Governor View

- The Governors have given serious consideration to the proposal of conversion to academy status over the past six years. The timing now feels right to support the move to academy status with the Sacred Heart Partnership of Schools following a series of meetings and discussions with the diocese, other schools and the local authority. As governors we are committed to working together to ensure the best possible educational outcomes for all pupils.

Can a school change its mind once they become an Academy?

- No, once a school has transferred to academy status they cannot change back again. This, of course, makes the decision an extremely critical one which we must all be committed to.

Are there any disadvantages to becoming an Academy?

- Although the Governing Body would still be responsible for the schools performance and the school achieving the best possible results, the Trustee's from the Academy Trust would gain full control over all aspects of school life. This includes finance, hiring of staff, removing or appointing new Governors and land rights on school property.
- At this time schools within the partnership have been delegated full powers by the trustees to run all of the above and there are no plans to change this at the present time. However the Headteacher and Governors retain high input into priority decisions.

What are the priorities for Newcastle moving forward?

School Structures and Academies

The national educational landscape that schools in Newcastle operate within continues to change. The number of schools that are now academies continues to grow and it is quite likely that by September 2018, all of Newcastle's secondary schools, more than a third of the primary schools and the Pupil Referral Unit will be academies. In addition, Newcastle will have studio schools, free schools and, potentially, a University Technical College (UTC). It remains the government's wish that all schools become academies and funding previously provided to local authorities has been substantially reduced and re-routed to the DfE's Regional Schools Commissioners in order to accelerate this process.

As a consequence, the role of the local authority in education has been substantially reduced to its core statutory responsibilities of strategic planning and sufficiency of school places and provision, admissions and attendance, the early years, finance, behaviour, safeguarding, special educational needs and some aspects of the curriculum and assessment.

(Dean Jackson Annual Education Report 2016)

Q&A from parents

Who are the current trustees of the high school academy and will they remain for the partnership if it goes ahead?

When the Partnership forms it will have new trustees of which there will be 9. However, several of these trustees will have served on the governing body of both Sacred Heart High School and Sacred Heart Primary school. The Chair of Governors from both schools will be Trustees.

Q&A from parents

How are trustees appointed and replaced? What term (time) are they appointed for?

Similar to Foundation Governors, Trustees are appointed by the Members. The Members are The Bishop, the Director of Diocesan Education and the Chief Operating Office for the Diocese. Their term is 4 years. Across the trustees, there needs to be a broad skill set. Typically, skills such as a knowledge of HR, Finance, Law, Education are considered to be important. When choosing any new trustees, it is important that the balance of these skills is maintained.

Q&A from parents

Who are trustees accountable to and is there a publicised code of conduct or guidelines for their role?

Trustees are accountable to the Members (see above), including the Bishop. They are bound by Charity Law and follow the code of conduct for governors. They are technically directors of a limited company and so bound by company law. Trustees are accountable to the DFE through the Funding Agreement, following all its regulations. The DFE or the Members can remove trustees.

Q&A from parents

**How do the LA continue to provide core statutory responsibilities once a school becomes an Academy?
E.g. Finance as in the letter it stated that the Academy Trust would gain full control over finance etc?**

That's right the Academy Trust would gain full control over finance see the following few slides about finance.

Q&A from parents

Who is in charge of finances ? Is there a chief financial officer?

One of the Members is the Chief Operations Office for the Diocese. On the board of Trustees there is a chief financial officer who has oversight of this aspect of the Partnership's work.

Q&A from parents

How do the trustees review the finances? Are they financially trained?

The finances across the Partnership are managed by a member of staff at the High School who is an qualified accountant (ACCA). The Partnership is bound through its Funding Agreement with the DFE. All aspects of this agreement must be adopted and applied. All of this is explained in the Academies Financial Handbook.

*All trustees are responsible for finance- the duty lies with the whole board. This function will then be delegated to a subcommittee for 'Staffing, Finance and Site'. Governors are selected on a skills based criteria for all committees as is currently the case. The purpose of that committee will be:
To assist the decision making of the Board of Trustees, by enabling more detailed consideration to be given to the best means of fulfilling the Board's responsibility to ensure sound management of the staffing, and the Trust's finances and resources including proper planning, monitoring and probity.*

To make appropriate comments and recommendations on such matters to the Board of Trustees on a regular basis. Major issues will be referred to the full Board for ratification.

To fulfil the statutory obligation to performance manage the Head Teachers of the academies in the Partnership and to ensure the systems for performance management in the academies meets statutory requirements.

Q&A from parents

Is there an annual audit of the partnerships figures?

Yes. All finances of the Trust are strictly audited and reported annually to the EFA. There is an annual year-end audit of the financial accounts and there is an annual internal assurance report. These are carried out by RSM.

Q&A from parents

Do the local authority remain involved in the audit on how funding is spent to ensure it's fully accounted for?

No. We are answerable to the EFA and have annual audits, and internally we report half-termly to the finance committee. Past copies of annual accounts are available on the school website. There is a lot of transparency in financial matters for Academies. The Partnership's finance committee will approve the financial statements in accordance with Companies Act and Charity Commission requirements.

Q&A from parents

Will there be any regular (ie quarterly) meetings for parents about what the partnership is working on- next priorities etc?

Parents will be involved in much the same way as they are now, school will identify and share it's priorities through newsletters and the website as well as maintaining an annual School Improvement Plan which is monitored by the local governing body.

Q&A from parents

As a school we have been working hard to raise funds towards a new minibus- could this be ring fenced before we join to avoid this being used for any other purpose- as it was specifically raised for the minibus fund.

Where a school is performing well and retains an Ofsted rating of at least 'good', as in the case for Sacred Heart Primary day to day aspects of running the school are delegated back to the school and the Local Governing Body. This means that our school would maintain its own budget and have control over its funds as it does now.

Q&A from parents

I am happy with the current school management system but have concerns for the future - for example if a leadership team had different priorities on how to spend the funds could parents ask the governors and trustees to 'review' this to ensure its appropriate? How would this work?

As above- the school will maintain its own School Improvement Plan, monitored and approved by the Local Governing Body. This will be enhanced by new opportunities of working together with professionals from other schools. Parents' views will remain very important to us and parents will be able to share these in much the same way as they do now.

Q&A from parents

How will the proposed Academy link with Sacred Heart High School impact on continuous education within the Academy trust as all boys will have to change schools after Year 6?

All children, boys and girls will have to change schools at the end of Year 6.

Sacred Heart Primary School will still be a separate school from Sacred Heart High School, it will not become one school. We will work in closer partnership with Sacred Heart High School, but we will also maintain our very strong links with St. Cuthbert's High School.

Q&A from parents

Will the Diocese retain ownership of the school land?

Yes

Q&A from parents

How do the LA continue to provide core statutory responsibilities once a school becomes an Academy? E.g. Finance as in the letter it stated that the Academy Trust would gain full control over finance etc?

See slides

Q&A from parents

How much influence do parents views have in the decision making process? Does a certain level of support need to be achieved?

We value every parent's comments and would like to hear your views, however the decision to make an application to the diocese will be made by the governing body, we are not counting votes. The diocese will then make a decision whether or not they allow the school to apply for academy conversion to the DFE.

Q&A from parents

How much influence does the Academy Board have over the day to day running of the school?

Where a school is operating at an Ofsted rating of Good or above then all day to day running is delegated back to the school. - Which in very general terms for us, means that nothing much will really change.

Q&A from parents

What would be the main advantage/benefit to pupils & families of converting?

- Working with our sister school to develop our mission as a Catholic school partnership within the Sacred Heart family
- Strengthening teaching and learning
- Strengthening assessment/data tracking linked to school improvement
- Access to a wider range of facilities and resources
- CDP opportunities for staff
- Develop transition for the children

How do I respond to the consultation?

- Governors would very much like to hear your opinion. During this **'drop in'** session please write down any comments, questions or concerns and we will try to answer them for you today.
- Mrs Brown and Mrs McKenna are here to answer your questions, along with Mrs Bath Headteacher of Sacred Heart High School, and members of our governing body.
- The aim of the session is to hear your views and answer any questions you may have.



social awareness

community · faith ·

personal growth

intellect ·