



Sacred Heart Primary School

Convent Road, Fenham Hall Drive,

Newcastle upon Tyne, NE4 9XZ

Telephone: (0191) 274 6695

Website: www.sacredhprim.newcastle.sch.uk

Email: admin@sacredhprim.newcastle.sch.uk

Headteacher: Mrs B Brown



Consultation – Academy Status

Dear Parents,

You may well be aware that the way schools are being organised is changing rapidly and radically. You may have heard that it is official policy from the government, supported by the Department for Education, that the great majority of schools should follow the route towards 'Academy Status' and many schools are currently looking at the options available to them.

Sir David Carter, National Schools Commissioner, in December 2016 encapsulated the shift in national policy, stating, "Every school will become an academy but not by 2022 and not by compulsion." He urged school leaders to use academisation to, "think about the right partnerships. Think about the organisation and groupings that will make a difference."

This is the course of action which the governors have been considering, 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.

Consequently, it is for the Governors to explore if this is the best option for the school, for the Headteacher, all staff and, most importantly, the children; one which will strengthen and build upon the progress and achievements made over many years, will protect the school grounds and buildings, and reinforce financial security and stability.

While exploring these options, the Headteacher and Governors have recently been considering whether to join what will become the 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.

The following pages attempt to answer some of the many questions you will have. There will certainly be an opportunity to air your views and ask questions as part of the consultation process; however, it is the purpose of this paper that you will have an informed view of what the proposed changes will mean for all concerned.

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. This makes us an attractive proposition for the Partnership. The Partnership assumes responsibility for maintaining school grounds to a high standard, as well as the prudent financial management and funding for the school.





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Possible Questions

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.

Do we lose control over our school?

As part of a local partnership with another Sacred Heart school, with the history of both schools rooted in the Society of the Sacred Heart the Partnership will have a very sympathetic approach to our needs as a sister school. 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.





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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.





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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.





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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 of Schools.

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 Trustees 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.

How do I respond to the consultation?

Governors would very much like to hear your opinion. We will be holding a 'drop in' session at Sacred Heart Primary School on the 16th of May between 2.30pm-5.30pm attended by myself as Headteacher, 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. Additional feedback forms are available from the school office if required.

There will be an opportunity for you to express your views and ask further questions at a consultation 'drop in' to be held on 16th May 2017 between 2.30pm – 5.30pm.

Yours sincerely,

Barbara Brown





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Academy Consultation Feedback Form

Please let us know your views regarding whether Sacred Heart Primary should convert to Academy status by joining the Sacred Heart Partnership of Schools a Multi Academy Trust.

Name.....

- Parent
- Staff
- Resident/parishioner
- Other

Formal consultation will begin on Tuesday 2nd May and will end at 12pm on Friday 26th May 2017. We would encourage written responses from all interested parties.

Your written responses should be handed in at the school office and marked "Private and Confidential) no later than 12pm Friday 26th May 2017.

Thank you for taking the time to respond to the consultation.

