

# **Polehampton C. of E. Schools Federation**

## **Academy Consultation Information**

**7<sup>th</sup> January – 6<sup>th</sup> February 2019**

### **Part 1: Information about the Proposal**

#### **Why are we looking at becoming an Academy and part of a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT)?**

There is no legal requirement from the government for us to become an academy, however the Government is still actively promoting academies, working with other schools within a Multi-Academy Trust, as being the best way to provide resilience and innovation in Education. In addition, we have seen significant reductions in Government funding to and the support offered to our schools from the Wokingham local authority (e.g. Premises, HR, Legal, School improvement advisors) and are continuing to experience pressure on our own school's funding.

We see academisation as the best way to secure the best futures for all our children and preserve our individual ethos, values and philosophy.

#### **What is an Academy?**

Academies are state maintained schools free to all children. They have an agreement with the Government which provides funding directly to the Academy Trust. They have to follow the same rules as all other state-funded schools over admissions, pupils with Special Educational Needs and exclusions. They don't have to follow the national curriculum, are still inspected by Ofsted and judged against national standards.

Not all academies are the same. Schools convert to academy status on what the DfE describes as an "as is" basis – so the existing character of each school is protected.

Academies are companies limited by guarantee which means that they do not pay dividends and nobody makes a profit – so all the money is spent on the academy's activities. This structure means that the Academy is a legal entity which can enter into contracts and employ staff. Academies are also exempt charities and the directors of the company are referred to as Trustees.

#### **What is a Multi Academy Trust?**

A Multi Academy Trust is a company established to be responsible for a number of Academies. Each Academy remains a separate school, but the governors are responsible to a board of Trustees established for the Trust as a whole.

#### **Why The Keys Academy Trust?**

The Keys Academy Trust was established on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017 as a company to be responsible for a number of academies. Currently, it is a group of local primary schools – Earley St Peters Primary School, St Sebastian's Primary School and The Coombes Primary School - with a Vision to provide the very best educational experiences for pupils and staff so that the family of schools are recognised as centres of academic and pastoral excellence at the heart of the communities they serve. The Keys recognises that each school within the Trust is unique and distinctive and they are committed to celebrating the local context and purpose of each.

Life within The Keys Academy Trust invites collaboration across schools, formation of alliances, and negotiation of differences for the common good so that schools within the Trust can give their

# **Polehampton C. of E. Schools Federation**

## **Academy Consultation Information**

**7<sup>th</sup> January – 6<sup>th</sup> February 2019**

children the very best start in life. It is a family of schools that support each other and share best practice.

They have a strong partnership established with the Oxford Diocesan Board of Education and academies within the Trust benefit from a wide range of support services.

The underlying values in The Keys Academy Trust are well suited to the diversity in our schools today and we believe joining The Keys is an opportunity to improve and collaborate with existing schools both within the Trust and more widely.

Within the The Keys, academies teach a broad, balanced and rich curriculum within national guidelines designed to inspire pupils to learn. The aim is to enable all children to take part in exciting learning, inside and outside the classroom, so that they can make rapid and sustained progress. There is high expectation and an aim to develop a love of learning so that pupils will thrive intellectually, socially, culturally and spiritually and learn to be the best they can be.

[www.keysacademytrust.org](http://www.keysacademytrust.org)

### **What impact will this have on the Polehampton Schools?**

Governors believe this will have a very positive impact and we are confident the relationship between schools and financial and educational benefits will develop over time. Membership of The Keys Academy Trust will help to secure the future of our school and of each school in it.

Within The Keys Academy Trust responsibility for leadership and management of each Academy will remain with its governing body and head teacher.

There will be no change to the uniform, the admissions arrangements or to the times of the school day or terms. All children and all members of staff will continue to be part of the school and staff terms and conditions are protected in law.

### **When will these changes take place?**

We want to know what parents and the local community think about this proposal. The next few months will be very busy as we continue to seek guidance and clarification, including meetings with the local authority, analysis and settlement of accounts and budgets, negotiation of key support services, financial preparation and asset registration and legal matters. The Diocese will support us in these processes and if all goes well we would like to achieve conversion ready for the Summer 2019.

### **How can I give my views?**

If you have any questions or comments you would like to make about the proposal to convert to academy status and join The Keys Academy Trust please send them using the form attached by Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2019 – either in hard copy to the school in an envelope marked 'Academy Conversion' or by email to [governors@polehampton-inf.wokingham.sch.uk](mailto:governors@polehampton-inf.wokingham.sch.uk)

# **Polehampton C. of E. Schools Federation**

## **Academy Consultation Information**

**7<sup>th</sup> January – 6<sup>th</sup> February 2019**

### **Part 2: Information about Academies**

#### **Legal Status**

Academies are not for profit companies limited by guarantee and have exempt charitable status. These companies have members rather than shareholders who appoint Trustees to run the company on their behalf. The object of the company is the provision of education, which is achieved by running academies. Members and Trustees are bound by the articles of the company to focus on delivering that object. Within multi academy trusts each school continues to have a local governing body on which parents and staff are represented and to which governance of the school is delegated.

Academy Trusts enter into contracts with the Secretary of State for Education (the funding agreement) in which the Trust commits to complying with the law on admissions, provision for children with special educational needs and who are looked after, charging for school activity and offering a broad and balanced curriculum. In return for these commitments the Secretary of State agrees to fund academies. Each multi academy trust has a master funding agreement together with a supplemental agreement for each new academy as it joins.

Specific provisions within the funding agreement protect the ethos and character which schools had before conversion. Local governing bodies of church academies continue to have foundation governors whose role is to secure the religious distinctiveness of the school.

#### **Curriculum**

Academies are required to have a broad and balanced curriculum which promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils and prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life. The curriculum must include:

English, maths and science;

Religious Education;

sex and relationship education (SRE);

For pupils below Key Stage 1 (i.e. reception and nursery), academies are required to follow the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

Academies are required to take part in the same pupil assessment arrangements and to report on the achievement and attainment of pupils in the same way as all other state-funded schools.

#### **Inspection**

Academies continue to be subject to Ofsted inspections and SIAMS inspections for Church of England academies.

# **Polehampton C. of E. Schools Federation**

## **Academy Consultation Information**

**7<sup>th</sup> January – 6<sup>th</sup> February 2019**

### **Staffing**

All staff employed by predecessor schools have the right to transfer to the academy on exactly the same terms and conditions as they have now. The regulations that place requirements on maintained schools do not directly apply to academies, but they must comply with their funding agreement. General employment law applies to academies in the same way as to other organisations. The Academy Trust has responsibility for setting pay and conditions. Teachers must be suitably qualified. All teachers employed at an academy have access to the Teachers Pensions Scheme and all other employees at an academy have access to the Local Government Pension Scheme.

### **Funding**

Each academy trust enters into a funding agreement with the Secretary of State which sets out the basis on which public funding will be made available (as described above). The academy trust will be funded by the Secretary of State as follows:

- **General Annual Grant (GAG)** - the equivalent to that which would be received by a maintained school taking account of the number of pupils at the academy. Academies also receive pupil premium funding and specific funding for any child with high level special educational needs in the same way as they do now.
- **Capital** - Academies can bid to the government for support with capital improvements and maintenance, particularly to address health and safety concerns.

### **Financial monitoring**

The academy trust must abide by the requirements of and have regard to the guidance in the Academies Financial Handbook. As a charitable company limited by guarantee the Trust's accounts must be fully audited and published – including on each school's website.

### **SEN**

Academies should be fully inclusive local schools and in common with all other schools have a clear legal duty to do their best to meet the needs of children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities.

### **Admissions**

Academies are required to provide education for pupils wholly or mainly drawn from the area in which the academy is situated. Academies must have admission arrangements that clearly set out how children will be admitted, including the criteria that will be applied if there are more applications than available places. Academies are required to provide education for pupils of different abilities (i.e. they may not select pupils by ability – unless before conversion they did so.) There are no plans to change the admissions arrangements for our School.

### **Insurance**

The Government has introduced the Risk Protection Arrangement which is an alternative to insurance cover for all academies. It provides cover for buildings and facilities and for public, employer and governor liability.

# **Polehampton C. of E. Schools Federation**

## **Academy Consultation Information**

**7<sup>th</sup> January – 6<sup>th</sup> February 2019**

### **Land and contracts**

Arrangements are put in place to ensure that each academy can continue to occupy its site and buildings. Contracts transfer from the school to the academy, where it makes sense for them to do so.

### **The conversion process**

Schools wishing to convert to academy status follow a process determined by the Academies Act 2010. Under that process, schools may apply for an Academy Order or are directed to pursue academy status. The DfE then decides whether the proposal put forward is an appropriate route for the schools concerned and, if it is content, issues an Academy Order. This indicates that the Secretary of State would allow the schools to convert and triggers the more detailed legal process that creates the structure in which the Academy can operate. It is not until that structure is in place and the terms of the Funding Agreement between the Secretary of State and the academy trust have been agreed that the school can convert. Governors make a final commitment to conversion when that agreement is signed.

As part of the process all schools consult stakeholders; staff are transferred from their current employer to the Academy Trust and their terms and conditions – including pensions - are protected in the process; arrangements are made for the Academy Trust to have the right to occupy the school site and buildings; and contracts are transferred from schools to the Academy Trust.

A grant from the DfE supports the costs incurred – including for legal advisers and for the appointment of a consultant to manage and support the process so that school leaders are not distracted from their responsibilities in school.