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Dear Parents

The Future Development of Our School

Multi-Academy Trust consultation: 23rd November 2016 – 6th January 2017

Further to our previous correspondence on the development of the school, our Governing Body has taken the decision to move to a formal consultation on the possibility of Osaldwick Primary School joining a Local Multi-Academy Trust (MAT). We are also continuing to explore options around becoming a single-site school, but for the moment, our strategic priority is to pursue gaining parents' and stakeholders' views on joining a MAT. Our reasons for this priority are to ensure the ongoing success of Osaldwick Primary School by accessing the best support for our staff and pupils as they work together raising the outcomes for all the children in our care. We are committed to engaging in a full consultation with all relevant parties, taking into account the views of parents, carers, staff, pupils and the local community. We would welcome your views so that the Governors can make a fully informed decision.

Why now and why us?

Along with all schools in York, we face a number of challenges: the educational landscape is evolving and changing at a rapid rate. Most schools in York are facing budget cuts over the next four years and we also know that costs will continue to rise significantly. Local Authority funding is decreasing, and as a result our Local Authority School Improvement Team has been forced to shrink from 40 professionals to 4. It is increasingly less able to provide the support and resources for schools that it once did. Schools are being encouraged to form structured partnerships and collaborate together in Multi-Academy Trusts. Working together with other schools we can develop the skills and expertise of our staff, supporting and being supported by one another.

Which Multi-Academy Trust?

At present the Governing Body does not have a preferred choice. We are investigating two local MATs.

The first is the Pathfinder MAT which came into existence on 1st August this year. The website for Pathfinder is www.pathfindermat.co.uk which contains all the information on the make-up of the MAT.

The second is the Ebor Academy Trust, a well-established local MAT. The website for Ebor MAT is www.eboracademytrust.co.uk.



Winner: Speaker of House of Commons National School Council Award 2010

The reasons for considering these two Multi-Academy Trusts are:

- We have worked closely with many of the schools in each MAT.
- It gives Osbaldwick Primary School the opportunity to access support when required, from a number of outstanding schools.

We would appreciate your views on the choice of MAT as well as the overall principle of joining a MAT.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the proposal?

Osbaldwick Primary School will join either the Pathfinder or Ebor MAT and in doing so convert to an Academy. Our school would retain its own Head Teacher, Governing Body, unique character and ethos. The Head and Governors would continue to lead and manage the day-to-day running and decision making for the school. The MAT is managed by a trust board who would deliver services such as payroll and human resources that we currently purchase from the Local Authority.

What is an academy?

Academies are classed as independent state schools with the freedom to determine their own policies in areas such as the curriculum, school hours, term dates, staff roles and service providers. Academies are managed by their own Academy Trust. They may continue to work with, but are no longer the responsibility of the Local Authority. Academies are given their funding direct from the government. This means that they get slightly more money per pupil, as money is no longer held back by the Local Authority to fund central services. This gives them greater freedoms about how to spend the money.

What is a Multi-Academy Trust?

In a Multi-Academy Trust, schools work together as a group of schools. The amount of governance (decision-making) kept at a local level varies according to the trust. In our case, Osbaldwick Primary School and other schools which may be part of the trust would retain their own Governing Bodies and Head Teachers, so that there would be a great deal of autonomy allowing for the individual characteristics and ethos of each school to continue.

Are all Multi-Academy Trusts the same?

No. They vary in format and size. The Pathfinder and Ebor MATs are relatively small in number; they include other York schools; endeavour to meet the needs of our communities and maintain a focus on excellence in education.

Are there other Multi-Academy Trusts in York?

Yes, several schools have already joined together as MATs across York and many more primaries are joining them in the near future. As well as the Pathfinder and Ebor MATs there is the Hope Learning Trust, and the South Bank MAT.

What are the financial benefits?

Although it is not the main reason behind the proposal, as we face times of austerity, any opportunity for additional funding cannot be ignored.

- Initial grant for the MAT to help support us as we are a school requiring improvement
- Additional per-pupil funding of approximately 2%
- Using the power of joint purchasing to reduce costs of services
- The opportunity to bid for grants from a central Government pot only open to academies.

Are there any rules about pupil admissions for academies?

Yes. Academies have to follow the law for school admissions, special educational needs and exclusions as if they were a maintained school. There would be NO change in catchment area.

Who deals with complaints when schools have become academies?

Parents or carers who have a complaint concerning their child's academy would contact the Head Teacher directly, as they would normally do, in accordance with the academy's complaints policy. If a parent is not happy with the response, they would then contact the MAT. If the parent is not happy with the trust's response, they would contact the Education Funding Agency which represents the interests of the Department for Education.

How do I find out more about academies?

You can find out more from the Department for Education at www.education.gov.uk. The page on academies is a good starting point.

When might this happen?

The school can apply to the Department for Education for an Academy Order. This releases funding to explore the change of status, particularly the legal aspects. Before any conversion takes place, and after consultation, the governing body would have to pass a resolution to that effect.

This consultation begins on 23rd November 2016. The consultation is planned to last for four weeks. Only if the school's Governing Body resolves, after considering responses, to join a MAT, would this go ahead. If the Governing Body does pass such a resolution, it is possible the school could join in September 2017.

What are the risks of this change?

This change is likely to carry some risks. For example:

- Joining a MAT does not by itself guarantee improvement – this is dependent on School Governance and Leadership and this would inevitably change over time. However, this is also true for Local Authority schools. This risk is minimised by having a strong Governing Body, sensitive to its own succession planning, supported by an equally strong Trust Board.
- The Conservative Government has reinforced its dedication to Academisation. In March 2016, they published a White Paper stating that they wish all schools to join a MAT. Although this has since been relaxed somewhat, the Government is clear about their direction of travel. It is very unlikely that this approach will change within their 5 year term of office. It is increasingly likely that more schools will convert to academy status, creating a greater risk of *forced* Academisation, rather than a choice of MATs, which we are currently considering.
- The capital funding currently enjoyed by academies may dry up leaving Osbaldwick Primary School no better off, but with the trust fully responsible for the buildings maintenance and repair. The risk here is of opportunities failing to materialise rather than outcomes being worse than before. Significant building problems would be covered by insurance based schemes.

What would be the changes for my child?

It is very unlikely that you or your child would notice any difference in their day-to-day schooling. The ethos of the school and the values we hold dear would stay the same.

Would teaching standards change?

Joining a MAT would support the continued training and development of our staff, and enable us to provide and extend the curricular and extra-curricular activities for our children.

What guarantees can you give?

It is very difficult to make guarantees when the outlook for education funding is so challenging, but Governors have committed to the following. As a result of joining any MAT:

1. There would be no name change for the school, other than potentially including the word 'Academy'.
2. The school would maintain the same admissions procedures. The Local Authority would still be asked to carry out the admissions arrangements for the academy.
3. There would be no job losses as a result of joining the MAT process.
4. There would be no changes to staff employment rights, pay or conditions of service.
5. Both teaching and support staff would enjoy the same pension rights as now.
6. Continuity of service in Local Government would be recognised for employees.
7. Union representation would continue to be encouraged.
8. The school would receive at least the same funding as it would have done as part of the Local Authority.
9. There would be no pay rises for senior staff other than the normal ones that would have taken place if the school were a Local Authority school.
10. There would be no changes to the current school uniform.
11. There would be no changes to the availability of free school meals for children.
12. There would be no detriment to the provision of our support for children with SEN/disabilities.

Consultation meeting dates

Consultation events for Osbaldwick Primary School parents and carers will take place as detailed below. In addition, we will be consulting staff, pupils, prospective parents and our Local Community. Please check our website, www.osbaldwickprimaryschool.co.uk for latest updates.

24th November: Informal drop-in session with Head Teacher and Governors at 3.30pm at the LANE SITE

29th November: Formal information meeting with Q&A at 6.30pm at the LANE SITE

5th December: Formal information meeting with Q&A at 8.45-9.30am. CRECHE provided at the LEYES

13th December: Informal drop-in session with Head Teacher and Governors from 3.15pm at the LEYES (after the Y1/2 Nativity)

Your views are welcome and can be sent direct to the Chair of Governors via post or handed in to reception on either site:

Chair of Governors: Osbaldwick Primary School, The Leyes, Osbaldwick York YO10 3PR

Chair of Governors: Osbaldwick Primary School, The Lane, Osbaldwick York YO10 3AX

or emailed: osbaldwick@york.gov.uk

Please indicate your link or interest to Osbaldwick Primary School so we can better address your queries.
All submissions will be circulated to all Governors.

Consultation closes: 6th January 2017

Yours sincerely

L J Barringer/P Jackson

L J Barringer & P Jackson
Head Teacher & Chair of Governors