

Broadwas CE Primary School, Broadwas on Teme, Worcester, WR6 5NE

18th May 2017

Dear Parents/Carers and Staff

Academy Information from Governors

Over the past few years the Governors of Broadwas CE Primary School have been considering the future for the school which has included exploration of the option for our school to become an Academy.

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with information about the possible conversion to academy status for the school and to outline the consultation process with all stakeholders on this proposal. As a 'good' school we are in a position to choose if and when to convert to an academy on our own terms. Increasingly, the benefits of remaining within the Local Authority are being diminished by the wide scale cuts to funding and services. Alongside this, the Governors recognise the advantages that can be achieved for schools who look for opportunities to work together within a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT).

On 10th February 2016, the Worcester Diocesan Board of Education, recognising the changing educational landscape, wrote to all schools outlining the development of the Diocese of Worcester Multi-Academy Trust (DoWMAT) and published their offer.

The Diocese of Worcester Multi-Academy Trust (DoWMAT) provides schools with the opportunity to join a family of schools, building on the existing capacity for school-to-school support but benefiting from a centrally managed and integrated service. The offer is based on best practice and is designed to provide strategic structure and administrative support to enable Headteachers and staff to focus on the main function of the school, to educate our children.

After careful consideration, the Governors decided this to be the best option to explore for our pupils and community. Therefore Broadwas CE Primary School Governors voted to consult with stakeholders with a view converting to academy status within the Diocese of Worcester Multi-Academy Trust.

By joining the DoWMAT we would:

- Join a not-for-profit organisation with children's education and well-being at its heart;
- Preserve the Christian ethos and distinctiveness of our church school;
- Benefit from the expertise and personnel within the Diocese. There is an organisational structure in place to support the DoWMAT and all the schools who join benefit from this as well as retaining their autonomy;

- Preserve our local school for both local children and those from the surrounding area and the community;
- Provide continuity - On conversion to academy status the standards of education and care provided to children will continue;
- Retain the identity of our school - It will remain Broadwas CE Primary School: e.g. same uniform, continuing governing body, after-school activities and links with other local schools within the cluster and Martley Pyramid.

The Diocese of Worcester Multi-Academy Trust Offer Document clearly outlines the DoWMAT offer and services provided to schools entering into the partnership. The indications are that the quality assurance and back-office administration will be completed more efficiently than currently through the Local Authority.

Many Church of England school Governors within the region are currently considering Academy status. Crowle First, St Barnabas First & Middle, Drakes Broughton First & Middle, Offenham First, The Littletons First, St. Nicholas Middle & Pinvin First, Malvern Parish Primary and Madresfield Primary Schools all joined the DoWMAT in Spring 2017. It is likely that the DoWMAT will grow significantly during the next 12 months.

As key stakeholders in our school, we would like to invite all parents and staff to meet with our Governing Body at School on Tuesday 6th June at 6.30pm for a presentation and opportunity for further discussion on the background and implications of the Academy proposal. Mrs Karen Surrall, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of DoWMAT, has been invited to participate in the meeting. In the meantime, we have attached a series of answers to frequently asked questions concerning academies which you may find useful.

To facilitate planning for the meeting we would appreciate your completion and return of the tear off slip to school denoting your availability to attend the meeting by 26th May.

Many thanks.

Mark Allen

Lynn Gill

Headteacher

Chair of Governors

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Reply slip

I/we are able/unable to attend the Academy presentation meeting at Broadwas CE Primary School on 6th June at 6.30pm.

Signed.....

Please print name.....

Frequently Asked Questions:

1. What is an academy?

Academies are independent, state-funded schools, which receive their funding directly from central government, rather than through a Local Authority (LA). They control their own admissions process and have more freedom than other schools to innovate. They are subject to inspection by Ofsted.

2. How many are there?

Currently (May 2016 figures), 2,075 out of 3,381 secondary schools are academies, while 2,440 of 16,766 primary schools have academy status. The number grew dramatically under the coalition government, from 203 in May 2010, and continued under the Conservative government.

3. Aren't academies all about improving failing schools?

They were once. The policy, which originated under Labour in 2000, aimed to improve struggling schools, primarily in deprived areas. This continues under the sponsored-academy model, where failing schools are taken over and run by an academy trust. But it has changed radically to embrace all types of schools - successful or otherwise. All schools - primary as well as secondary - have been invited to convert to academy status, with priority being given to the best performers.

4. What is a "Multi-Academy Trust"?

Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) are groups of academies that have chosen to 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". Although some schools have already converted to stand-alone academies, any school now wishing to convert has to become part of, or establish, a MAT.

5. What are the benefits of this proposed change?

By far the most significant benefit to the schools involved is their increased ability to work collaboratively; by sharing best practice and working together in areas such as school improvement, pupil attainment, assessment and monitoring and enrichment opportunities, the schools passionately believe we can improve the educational outcomes of all of the children in the schools. There are further financial and administrative benefits to be gained through focused outsourcing of supplies and centralised services, identifying and securing school improvement grants and increased flexibility and succession planning for school staff. The schools will also ensure that they remain in control of their futures, rather than be at risk of influence from a large corporate Academy organisation.

6. What are the benefits to the community?

An important benefit of the proposed MAT is to keep the schools as key hubs of their local communities, retaining their individual identities but working in partnership to help galvanise those communities.

7. Will the schools be financially better or worse off?

The legal costs for conversion to an Academy within a MAT will be met via a £25,000 grant from central government. Each school will receive its own yearly funding on the same per-pupil basis as the LA does for

maintained schools, direct from the Education Funding Agency and the MAT itself will receive funds from a “top slice” from each of the schools funding; the level of that slice is anticipated as being a little lower than the amount currently withheld by the Local Authority, so each school should be slightly better off, but we stress that the reasons for forming a MAT are primarily educational and not financial.

8. What about other school staff?

School staff will be employed by the MAT rather than the Local Authority and their employment terms and conditions will be transferred under a standard process known as TUPE. Union memberships and pensions would be unaffected.

9. What would happen regarding provision for children with Special Educational Needs?

Effectively nothing changes; the schools would still have to comply with the Admissions Code and any SEN obligations as set out in the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice. The LA would retain responsibility for pupils with an Educational Health Care Plan in an academy on the same basis as in maintained schools. The Governing Body would retain their excellent ethos of inclusion through which there is a strong commitment to providing the best possible education for the young people of all abilities and backgrounds from our community.

10. Will there be new school name?

No. There are no plans to change the name of the school.

11. Will there be any changes to term dates and school hours?

There are no plans to change the length of the school day or term dates as a result of this proposal. Academies can implement such changes if they believe it to be beneficial to the education of the children at the schools but any such change would require a full consultation process.

12. Will Broadwas remain a Church of England school?

Yes.

13. Will any changes to the School be made as a result of conversion?

We do not intend to make any changes to the School as a result of the conversion, apart from taking advantage of the opportunities outlined above to work more closely with other schools in the MAT.

14. How to take part in the consultation process?

At this stage, we are not committing the School to conversion to Academy status. We are consulting with everyone associated with our School before Governors meet again to make a final decision. We would like to know what you think of this proposal and are inviting you to take part in this consultation. Your views are important to us. In addition to attending the meeting on 6th June, or if you are unable to attend, we would also welcome comments e-mailed to: office@broadwas.worcs.sch.uk

If you wish, letters can be handed to the school office for the attention of the Chair of Governors marked - “Confidential: Multi-Academy Trust proposal” to ensure prompt attention.