



Red Oaks Primary School
Redhouse Way
North Swindon Learning Campus
Swindon
SN25 2AN
Tel: 01793 493920.
Headteacher: Mrs R Surch.
Chair of Governors: Mr F J Child.

All staff Red Oaks Primary School,

17th April 2018

I am writing to advise you that the governing body of Red Oaks Primary School has decided to enter into initial discussions with The Park Academies Trust (TPAT). You may be aware Abbey Park School and Lydiard Park Academy, the lead secondary school, are members of TPAT. If Red Oaks joins this Multi Academy Trust, we would be the lead school for the primary phase.

If the processes we need to undertake concludes in the board's proposal to convert, the date we anticipate for this will be **September / October 2018**. However, this is subject to consultations with staff, parents/carers and other interested parties. The board will not finalise this decision until all parties have been given equal opportunity to feed back to the board and we have completed all consultations before a final decision is made.

I would like to give you some background information about the process of the conversion and why the Governors believe that this is in the best long term interest of our pupils and school.

A key consideration by the Governors is to consult with staff so that they have an opportunity to comment on the proposal, ask questions and express views and concerns only about the decision to convert at this point in time. The first stage of staff consultation begins with this letter. A meeting will be held in school with Red Oaks Governors and representatives from The Park Academies Trust Executive Leadership Team on **Tuesday 1st May 2018 at 3:15pm**. The consultation period will end on **Friday 11th May 2018**. Governors will then consider all staff responses as well as those from parents and other interested parties following consultations and any formal representations made.

Factors that played a part in our considerations were maintaining a balanced budget, as well as sustaining and increasing the benefits to our pupils retaining the same level of teaching expertise within the current economic environment. In order to achieve this criteria, the governing body agreed we should seek an alliance with



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a local academy that meets and shares a culture and ethos of providing the best education for pupils.

A key element of the criteria was a focus on pupil attainment and progression, especially from year 6 to year 7, ensuring the transition from primary to secondary school is as seamless as possible and a continuous educational path. This will also build a closer relationship with local secondary schools for shared facilities, training, expertise and support across subjects.

Over time we can achieve a better 'economy of scale' through joint purchasing of goods, services and training etc. Another element was to match our own values of the board, senior leadership team and staff at Red Oaks to '**Aspire**', '**Achieve**' and '**Grow**' and deliver the best education for all children which is strongly shared by the Executive Staff at TPAT.

Initial discussions have led us to conclude that the advantages of being a member of a larger family, where all schools can enjoy and benefit from shared practices a broader range of resources and experiences outweigh the restrictions of a 'standalone' school. This will be a major contributor to achieving the increased benefits across all schools within the MAT.

The governing body have concluded that there would be greater opportunities for staff to share and build common practices and develop their careers among a larger group of likeminded providers. Discussions are ongoing with TPAT with a view that Red Oaks Primary School will act as the 'lead primary school' for the Trust, as Lydiard Park Academy is for the secondary school phase for the Trust.

If feedback and representations are favourable for converting and joining TPAT, Red Oaks staff would become employed by The Park Academies Trust. Having the MAT as an employer allows flexibility around sharing resources to meet the needs of individual schools.

The board also believes it creates opportunities for staff development across the schools by providing scope for academies to develop their staff through shared professional development. The MAT can also provide a clear, consistent strategy and vision across the schools that benefit pupils and staff. A MAT can negotiate contracts and services that achieve much better value for money than if each school was to negotiate individually.

Red Oaks governing body values the strong working relationship it has with staff. It should be clear that this is a 'consultation about converting to academy status', it is not a job related TUPE consultation at this stage. However, letters



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have been sent to all staff unions for their feedback and future representation along with staff should the Governing Body agree to convert to academy status.

Some Q & A's

What is a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT)?

A Multi-Academy Trust is a charitable company which is responsible for running two or more academies. The Academy Trust has a master funding agreement with the Department for Education but with separate funding for each individual Academy based on the usual budget formula. The MAT is also the single employer for staff in all its schools. The MAT may include primary, secondary and special schools. There are three levels of governance within a MAT: Members, Trustees and Local Advisory Bodies (LAB). The Board of Trustees has ultimate responsibility for the performance of each academy and for setting the strategic direction of the MAT, and it typically then delegates the day-to-day running of each academy to a LAB.

Will Red Oaks Primary School definitely become an academy?

The governing body will submit an application to convert to academy status and is aiming to convert around **September / October 2018** subject to consultations with staff, parents and other interested parties.

The governing body will not sign the Funding Agreement until parents / carers and staff at Red Oaks have had the opportunity to comment on the proposals.

Any comments or representations which are made about the proposal will be considered by the governing body before a decision is taken to sign the Funding Agreement. The governing body will not sign the Funding Agreement unless they are content that conversion would be in the best interest of the school and its pupils.

The final decision to convert or not will be made at the Governing Body meeting on the **Tuesday 22nd May**. Following this a further meeting will be arranged for all staff to discuss TUPE arrangements with union representation if you require. See below for details on how to feedback.

What are the benefits of being part of a Multi-Academy Trust?

In the boards opinion the benefits are numerous:

- **Academies are independent of local authority control.**
This means that academies have more freedom about how they conduct themselves.



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- **Academies have more freedom over the curriculum taught.**
This means that academies may chose not to teach parts of the National Curriculum which they do not consider appropriate for their students
- **Academies can set their own pay and conditions of service for their staff.**
Academies have the freedom to alter the pay and conditions of their staff (subject to normal employment law protections for staff) and can provide staff with better pay and conditions than previously
- **Academies have more freedom to undertake innovative projects.**
Academies are companies and so have more freedom to undertake innovative projects, such as setting up and utilising trading subsidiaries.
- **Academies offer advancement.**
The board believes that there are more opportunities for staff development and shared expertise and for subject specialists to be created working across schools,

Are there any disadvantages to becoming an academy?

The Multi Academy Trust will be directly liable for matters such as insurance, employment liabilities, pensions, H.R. and health and safety. However, as mentioned above, academies receive more funding from central government to help them meet these additional costs. These responsibilities will be overseen by the MAT Central Services Teams, who will support all of the schools and provisions within the MAT.

How will staff be affected?

TUPE legislation would only apply if the decision is made to convert. Teachers pay and conditions would still apply to all MAT staff. Job security is not directly related to conversion to a MAT, by this we mean that all schools - academies and maintained - are subject to funding allocations and budget constraints.

What will it mean for pupils, parents and staff at Red Oaks Primary School?

The pupils will not see any difference. The school name and the school uniform would not change as a result of the joining TPAT. There are no plans to change the school day, the school year or the holiday pattern. The ethos will not change and we are planning to continue to be an inclusive school which is committed to working with and for our CLAN and SEND children.

We expect that the most important change, over time, will be the raising of achievement for pupils as we work together to ensure they have access to greater resources and the best possible provision.



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Governance would change if the school converts, the 'Governing Body' will become a Local Advisory Board which is a committee of the Board of Trustees. Expertise will be drawn from within TPAT who will establish a Scheme of Delegation and Terms of Reference for the Local Advisory Boards to operate under. Focus will be on achievement within the school, not strategy or finance.

We will have more self-government in how we spend our funding. The additional responsibilities as part of the process would be overseen by a central services team ensuring that we always get value for money.

We can also use the flexibilities provided by being part of a larger organisation to help us to raise standards further by collaborating with the member schools on areas of mutual benefit and by exercising economies of scale whenever we can make use of our increased buying power to allow more of our funding to be directed to the classroom for the benefit of our pupils.

Academy status is intended to promote innovation by giving school leaders more freedom to decide how best to meet the needs of their pupils, parents and wider communities.

A vital part of the Government's stated vision is to create a more diverse school system offering excellence and choice, where each school has a strong ethos and sense of mission and acts as a centre of excellence or specialist provision.

What happens next?

The governors would like to invite you to an initial consultation on **Tuesday 1st MAY 2018** at 3:15pm with Governors, and representative from The Park Academies Trust Executive Leadership Team and Unions if required. The purpose of the meeting will be to outline some of the changes and respond to your initial questions about converting to academy status.

Following further meetings to review all stakeholder feedback there will be a full governors' meeting on **Tuesday 22nd May 2018** when a decision will be made about whether to continue with the process of converting to an academy. Only following this decision will further discussions take place on TUPE.

"How can I make representation or discuss any issues"?

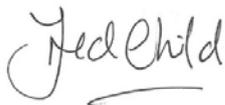
The closing date for representations to be made is **Tuesday 11th May 2018**. Please see below for details:



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1. Representations can also be made in writing to:
Mr Fred Child. Chair of Governors and/or
Mrs. Rachel Surch. Headteacher
Red Oaks Primary School.
North Swindon Learning Campus.
Redhouse Way,
Swindon. SN25 2AN.
Or by email: chair@redoaks.swindon.sch.uk and/or
head@redoaks.swindon.sch.uk
2. We have set up a survey which we would appreciate your time in completing, it will take just a couple of minutes and can be found by following this link:
<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/CHWPG2B>
The survey will close on **Friday 27th April 2018** which will give us time to evaluate and respond to you at the consultation meeting. We are issuing a similar survey to parents for their feedback.
3. An opportunity for staff to discuss with the Chair of Governors and Headteacher any personal issues you have will be available at the following times and dates, these will be held in the 'pod'. Dates available are: **Thursday 03rd, Friday 04th and Wednesday 09th May from 1515 to 1600.** No appointment necessary just turn up and have a chat. This can be individually or in small groups if that works for you? These will be in addition to any further formal TUPE consultations.

Yours sincerely



Mr Fred Child
Chair of Governors
Email: chair@redoaks.swindon.sch.uk



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