

Wychbold First and Nursery School

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Wychbold First and Nursery School proposal to become an Academy school and join the Rivers C of E Academy Trust

The Governing Body's priority is to enable the school to continue to provide an excellent education for our children while protecting the school's role at the heart of the community and retaining its unique qualities and strengths. We recognise that the role of Local Authorities in supporting schools is changing and that it is Government policy to encourage effective schools to become Academies within Multi Academy Trusts.

Summary of points to consider

Wychbold First and Nursery School will:

- remain focussed on delivering excellent teaching and learning within its local community;
- continue to have its own local Head with less administration and more time to focus on the teaching and learning within the school;
- continue to have its own local governing body;
- work together with the other schools in the MAT on projects to improve education and learning in all schools; and
- share administration and support in order to reduce costs and improve effectiveness.

The Academy Trust will:

- provide a Joint Management Board to provide oversight of the performance of each school and ensure effective investment in improvements across all schools;
- help and challenge the school to improve in all it does; and
- provide additional enrichment opportunities for our children to join with other children at events across the MAT.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is an Academy?

An Academy is a state school that is run by an Academy Trust. The Academy Trust enters into an agreement with the Secretary of State for Education that sets out its responsibilities and accountabilities for the effective running of the Academy. The Academy is funded directly by the Government and is no longer run by the Local Authority. Academies must control their own admissions process. Academies are subject to inspections by Ofsted.

2. What is a Multi-Academy Trust?

A Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) is when 2 or more Academies come together in partnership. Each MAT must have a group of "members" who have an overview of the governance arrangements and a single board of "trustees". The trustees are ultimately responsible for the Academy schools in the Trust. The schools in the MAT support each other in:

- developing and sharing best practice in teaching, learning and curriculum
- creating a skilled, motivated, expert workforce

- ensuring high standards through mutual challenge of performance
- making optimum use of their resources.

All academy trusts are charitable trusts and they can not make a profit. Academy Trusts must publish their accounts online so that the information is publicly available.

3. How would converting to an Academy benefit our School?

This proposal will benefit our school by increasing our ability to work collaboratively; by sharing best practice and working together in areas such as school improvement, pupil attainment, assessment, monitoring and enrichment opportunities, we believe this will improve the educational outcomes for all of our children and will enhance the teaching and learning for all children. The proposal will allow us to share skills and operate more effectively, together will further financial and administrative benefits through focused outsourcing of supplies and centralised services, identifying and securing school improvement grants and increased flexibility and succession planning for school staff.

4. What are the benefits to the community?

It is important to Wychbold First School to remain a key hub for the local community, there is no reason for this to change due to this proposal.

5. Who will be responsible for running our school?

The Academy Trust has a Board of Directors. The Trust Board will delegate many powers to a Local Governing Body (LGB), which will have a role similar to that of the current School Governing Body. The vast majority of Governors are likely to be the same people as now.

Each school will continue to be run by its Head. The Executive Principal, will lead the Trust's operation, to be accountable to the Trust Board for the performance of all schools in the MAT and to provide appropriate support to Heads.

6. What is involved in becoming an Academy?

Wychbold First and Nursery School Governing Body has voted for this proposal *in principle*. The school must now complete a consultation with parents, pupils, staff and the wider community which the Governors will take into account in reaching its decision whether to proceed with the application to the Secretary of State for Education. Our application can be turned down at any stage and we can withdraw at any stage during the application process. However, once formally agreed, when the Academy conversion has been signed by the Secretary of State, the decision can not be reversed.

We are holding an open consultation session on Wednesday 7th February 2018 between 4.30pm and 6.30pm in the school hall.

We would expect to become an Academy within the Multi-Academy Trust on 1st June 2018, if the final decision to convert is made by the Governing Body.

7. Would the school have to change its name, logo or uniform?

There is no obligation for a school to change its name, logo or uniform. School governors are not proposing to make any changes.

8. How will being an Academy affect staff?

Currently, the employer for staff at our school is Worcestershire County Council (WCC). After conversion all staff at the school will be employed by the Academy Trust. Staff are legally protected to transfer under the same employment terms and conditions, including pensions. Their continuity of service is protected, and all staff will be consulted in accordance with the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations.

9. How are the children affected?



In many ways the children will not notice any immediate difference, they will be in the same uniform, in the same classrooms with the same teaching staff. We will continue to strive for an outstanding education for all our children. However, in time the children may notice changes and improvements in the way that they learn, resulting from the greater training opportunities given to teaching staff to innovate and improve the pupils' learning. Children and parents / carers may also benefit from more opportunities sharing with the other schools and pupils.

10. Will the school get more money as an Academy?

Academies receive the same amount of per-pupil funding as they would receive from the Local Authority as a maintained school.

All funding comes directly from Government to the Multi Academy Trust which, through individual school participation on the Board of Directors, then controls the overall budget. Each school does not necessarily have more money, but as a group the schools are better able to control budgets and find efficiencies to spending. There are legal costs for conversion to an Academy, these will be met by a £25,000 grant from central government. The proposal to join a MAT is not financially motivated.

11. Do the school buildings and land transfer to the Academy Trust?

No. When a community school becomes an academy, the legal title is not transferred from the County Council to the academy trust. The freehold for the land and buildings is retained by the council and a lease is granted to the trust.

12. What are the risks of becoming an Academy?

The change to Academy takes a school out of Local Authority control, but does not exclude the school from Local Authority support. For example, Academies can continue to receive finance, HR, behavioural support and other services from the Local Authority and where these represent 'best value' the MAT would use these services. Where the MAT feels that others can provide better services or better value the change in status to Academy increases the freedom to make these changes.

There are risks associated with not changing to Academy status. At some stage in the future, any school might be influenced to become part of a broader Academy Chain. We believe that the ability to choose a MAT offers the best opportunity to sustain our vibrant and successful school.

13. How will admissions to the school be affected?

The school will become its own admissions authority but will be required to adopt clear and fair admission arrangements in line with the admissions law and the School Admissions Code. The Local Authority will continue to have responsibility for making sure there are sufficient places locally and will coordinate the admissions process for all schools. This means parents will still only have to complete one application per child.

14. Will my child still be able to transfer to and attend the local Middle and High Schools?

Yes. The process for applying for your child's next stage of education will remain the same, with parental choice being the key factor. This proposal does not change the feeder / transfer schools from Wychbold First and Nursery School.

15. Does becoming an Academy change the relationship with other schools and the community?

No. Academies must ensure that they continue to be at the heart of their community, collaborating and sharing facilities and expertise with other schools and the wider community.

16. Will our responsibilities in relation to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and exclusions change?

No. Responsibilities as an Academy in relation to SEND and exclusions will be just the same as they are now.

17. Can a child with an Education Health Care Plan nominate an Academy as his or her school of choice?

Yes. Schools converting to Academy status can retain the admissions criteria they currently use. These arrangements and related processes must at all times comply with the School Admissions Code.

18. What will be the impact on free school meals?



There will be no change to free school meals. The application process will remain the same and Wychbold would continue to encourage families that are entitled to free school meals to apply for them.

19. Will other schools be joining the MAT in the future?

This is likely, the decision on which schools can join the MAT is the responsibility of the MAT members and trustees.

20. Which Multi Academy Trust (MAT) are we proposing to join?

We are proposing to join the Rivers C of E Academy Trust.

21. Which other schools are already part of the Rivers C of E Academy Trust?

Currently there are seven other First / Primary schools in the Rivers C of E Academy Trust, all of these schools are located in Worcestershire. Cutnall Green C of E Primary School and St Peters C of E Academy (Droitwich) are the nearest geographically to Wychbold First and Nursery School. The other schools in the Trust are: Cranham Primary (Worcester), Great Witley Primary, Heronswood Primary (Kidderminster), Northwick Manor Primary (Worcester) and St Clements Primary (Worcester). The Rivers MAT has also been successful in a bid to open a new Free School in North Worcester by September 2019.

22. Why join the Rivers C of E Academy Trust?

The Rivers MAT wants to create a world class education system for all pupils within the MAT. The Rivers MAT want all our pupils to value education and become lifelong learners so that, when they leave school, they are able to adapt to a changing global, political, social and economic context, enabling them to prosper throughout their lives. Rivers sum up their vision in three words, 'Love, learn, live', Wychbold will adopt the same vision.

The MAT challenge is to continue the journey to improve systems so that all the schools within the MAT are 'Outstanding', not only in terms of their Ofsted judgement, but in the eyes of their learners and community.

The MAT aims to contribute positively to the self-improving school-led system in education. Rivers are committed to adding real value to your community and to push the MAT to become even more effective in order to achieve the very best for all young people. Rivers believe in true collaboration, working in partnership, investing in people and building capacity for long term, sustainable success. The Rivers MAT will continue to promote our values and visions to all staff at all levels across our MAT.

A group of Wychbold Governors and Staff have met with the CEO Kate Brunt and visited several of the other MAT schools to assess what the Rivers Trust can offer Wychbold First and Nursery School, the key reasons we believe the Rivers is right for Wychbold are, the:

- Shared vision and ethos;
- Close proximity of the schools in the MAT to Wychbold, particularly the two other Droitwich schools;
- Increased support for school improvement; and
- diversity of schools within the MAT, whilst enabling Wychbold to retain its own identity.

23. Where can I find out more information?

Further information about the Rivers MAT is available on their website <http://www.riverscofe.co.uk/>

The Department for Education website has further information about academies <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academies-a-myth-buster>

24. How to take part in the consultation process?

At this stage, this is a proposal. We are consulting with everyone who may have an interest with our school before Governors meet again to make a final decision whether to proceed. 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. We are offering an open consultation evening on Wednesday 7th February 2018 between 4:30 and 6:30pm in the school hall. If you are unable to attend, we would welcome your questions or comments by email to: head@wychbold.worcs.sch.uk or in writing to:**



Ref: Wychbold Academy Consultation
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The consultation period opens on Monday 15th January and closes on Monday 26th February 2018.

Yours sincerely

Claire Howitt
Headteacher

Eleanor Sinton
Chair of Governors

