



RICHARD TAYLOR CE AIDED PRIMARY SCHOOL

Bilton Lane
HARROGATE
North Yorkshire
HG1 3DT

Telephone: 01423 563078

Fax number: 01423 701103

Email: admin@richardtaylor.n-yorks.sch.uk

Head Teacher: Mr Andrew Symonds BA Hons

Monday 20th October 2014

Dear Parents,

I am writing with important information regarding the future of Richard Taylor C of E Aided Primary School (RTS). You will be aware that effective schools are being asked to consider the process of conversion to academy status. The majority of Harrogate's highly successful secondary schools have taken the decision to convert and a number of primary schools are in the process of doing so.

The governors of RTS have been considering the school's future carefully and have made the decision that now is the right time to engage in the process of change. The governors have looked at the options which face the school and are proposing what we consider to be an outstanding opportunity to build a partnership for the future with a school which shares our ethos, mission and standards.

The governors have decided to consult formally on the proposal that Richard Taylor C of E Aided Primary School should convert to academy status as part of a Multi Academy Trust (MAT) with St Aidan's Church of England High School (St Aidan's). This will involve the MAT entering into a funding agreement with the Secretary of State for Education.

We hope that you agree that this is an exciting prospect which will enable us to work closely with St Aidan's, using one another's strengths to maximise opportunities for all our children.

The governors have been granted permission by the Diocese and the trustees for RTS to apply to the Department for Education to become an academy. As part of this process, we will be consulting on whether RTS should become an academy with St Aidan's under the MAT. This consultation will include parents, staff, neighbouring schools, the PCC at St. John's Church and unions to provide the governors with a clear picture of the school community's view about this change.

This letter marks the beginning of the consultation process.





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The governors would value the opinion of all parents during this consultation process. We have attached a 'frequently asked questions' document which contains more information. This will also be available on the school website.

We will also be holding a meeting for all parents and interested parties on Thursday 6th November at Richard Taylor Primary School starting at 6pm. We would like to invite you to attend this meeting at which you will be able to find out more information and raise any questions you have.

If you do not plan to attend the meeting, please submit any questions or comments you may have on the form attached to this letter, returning the form to the school office by no later than 5.00 p.m. on Friday 14th November. Alternatively, any views or concerns can be submitted via the school's e mail address at admin@richardtaylor.n-yorks.sch.uk

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Symonds
Head teacher





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Consultation Reply Form

The governing body of Richard Taylor C of E Aided Primary School welcomes your views as to whether RTS should convert to academy status under a Multi Academy Trust with St Aidan’s Church of England High School.

Comments/ Questions

Parents’ Name (Please print).....

Child’s Name/Class.....

To help the school gauge interest, please return the following slip to indicate whether you will be attending the meeting at RTS on Thursday 6th November at 6pm

Thank you.

.....

Consultation Meeting

We/I shall be attending the consultation meeting on Thursday 6th November at 6pm

Name (please print).....





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Information on Academies

The landscape of education is changing. Schools are already taking much greater responsibility for many areas of school improvement than was the case five years ago.

As a voluntary aided school, we already have greater freedom than many of our neighbouring community schools in terms of buildings and finance. The process of academy conversion will allow us even greater freedom and flexibility to control the entirety of our budget and to buy in the most cost effective partners to support our children and staff as we continue to grow and develop.

Our Christian ethos is at the heart of everything that we do. The choice of St Aidan's Church of England High School (St Aidan's) as our partner in the new Multi Academy Trust (MAT) will allow us to maintain and retain this vision. We will continue to be a school founded with a Christian ethos in the heart of North Yorkshire and serving our local community.

As an academy, we would be funded directly from central government and not through the local authority (LA). We would use this funding to buy in the best services for our children from a range of partners including the LA. We would still be inspected by Ofsted and our children would still be assessed at the end of each Key Stage and results would still be published to parents.

We will continue to build on our relationships with our neighbouring schools including all other secondary schools and with the wider community. We believe that now is the best time to build a new and exciting partnership with St Aidan's for the best interests of our students.





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Frequently Asked Questions

What are the advantages of becoming an academy?

Becoming an academy means that Richard Taylor C of E Aided Primary School (RTS) would have greater freedom to innovate and raise standards. We would have much greater freedom around the delivery of the curriculum, using our budget to work with the best partners available.

We have worked very hard at creating a curriculum which is relevant to our children and our community, which meets the needs of our children. We want to continue developing that curriculum whilst taking on board what we consider to be the best parts of the National Curriculum. We would still be subject to Ofsted inspection and the children would still be prepared for SATs in the same way as they are now. (Please see further below).

We also have the ability to change the length of terms, term dates and staff terms and conditions but we must stress that we have no intention of doing this.

Would Richard Taylor Primary School receive more money as an academy?

Academies receive the same level of per-pupil funding as maintained schools receive from the LA, but they also receive an additional amount called the education services grant which is currently retained by the LA to pay for some services which the LA provide. However, out of this money we would have to purchase some services which are currently provided by the LA.

The Government states that becoming an academy should not bring about a financial advantage or disadvantage to a school. The main change is that academies have greater freedom over how they use their budgets. As an academy we would therefore have more freedom to buy the services we need from a range of providers and obtain best value for money and the best quality services.





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At present, the Richard Taylor C of E Aided Primary School is a voluntary aided school which means we already manage many parts of our budget. This change is not therefore as great as it would be for other schools.

We do believe that the greater flexibility and the ability to innovate would mean there would be more money to invest in the school for the benefit of the children.

Why should Richard Taylor Primary School consider becoming an academy?

In addition to the fact that we believe the greater freedoms and flexibilities will enable us to raise educational standards, there are other factors which are pointing towards conversion to an academy. As central services provided by the LA are already considerably reduced and the services which we receive are much more limited than they were a few years ago, all schools are being urged to give serious consideration to pursuing conversion to academy status.

The Government's policy is to encourage conversion and they are currently providing funding to assist with the costs of doing so. As a good school with outstanding features, we are in the fortunate position to make this decision at a time and in a manner of our choosing.

The governing body therefore feels that we need to engage actively with this issue; if we wait and ignore the changes that are happening around us, we may lose our choices and have a model of academy conversion imposed upon us.

How accountable are academies?

Academies are subject to inspections by the schools' inspectorate, Ofsted, in the same way as other schools are. Academies' SATs results will continue to be published as at present, alongside those of other state schools in league tables. Academies are accountable directly to the Secretary of State for Education.





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Would conversion to academy status affect our admissions policy?

Academies are subject to the same admissions code as other state schools. This sets the rules for fair admissions. Academies also remain part of the LA application system. However, an academy trust which operates an academy is the admissions authority for that academy, rather than the LA. We do not propose to alter our position on admissions and appeals on admissions.

What about our exclusions policy?

Academies have to follow government guidance and the law on excluding pupils. This includes reporting exclusions to the LA.

What about the way in which Richard Taylor Primary School is governed? Would that change?

Very little would change in the way that RTS is governed as RTS is currently governed by the governing body and will continue to be governed by a governing body following conversion to academy status. Whether or not RTS becomes an academy, we will need to ensure that the governing body as a whole has the appropriate skills and knowledge to successfully perform its duties.

Would we continue to be a Church of England school?

Yes, in fact we have been required to obtain the consent of the Diocese and the trustees for RTS before applying to the Department for Education (DfE) to become an academy. We are very proud of the school's Christian ethos and distinctiveness and intend to preserve it whether or not we become an academy. We will do this by ensuring that the Church of England foundation is always represented on the governing body.

Would staff remain the same after conversion?

All current permanent school staff at RTS would transfer to employment with the Multi Academy Trust (MAT) on academy conversion and there are no plans to change the staffing structure at RTS. The governing body is committed to continuing to recruit and retain high quality staff and will support existing staff through the transition and beyond if the school does convert to academy status.





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Would staff pay and conditions change?

When a school converts to academy status, all members of staff are entitled to transfer to the academy trust under their existing employment terms and conditions under the TUPE regulations which means that their terms and conditions of employment are protected by the TUPE regulations on academy conversion. Thereafter, the academy trust, which will govern the academy, may consult with staff and their union representatives on changes to these terms and conditions, for example to enable the academy to operate over different term times or change the length of the school day.

When St Aidan's Church of England High School (St Aidan's) was consulting on becoming an academy, a commitment was made that staff terms and conditions would be no less favourable than they would be if staff were employed by the governing body or LA and the governing body of RTS wishes to make the same commitment.

What does the process of converting to academy status entail?

Initially, schools register their interest in becoming an academy online with the DfE. Church schools must also seek approval from their Diocese and school trustees before submitting an application to the DfE. A school then completes and submits an application to become an academy to the DfE. A school must also consult with parents, staff and all other stakeholders before a funding agreement is entered into between the academy trust and the Secretary of State for Education.

When the Secretary of State for Education approves the school's application to convert, they issue an academy order. An academy trust is then set up to operate the school as an academy and enter into a funding agreement with the Secretary of State to run the academy. The academy trust also employs the staff and owns the assets at the academy and will enter into arrangements to enable it to occupy the school site after academy conversion.

The final stage is the signing of the funding agreement with the Secretary of State for Education.





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Do schools have to cover the costs of conversion to academy status?

No. The DfE pays a flat-rate grant of £25,000 into the school's bank account after an academy order has been issued. To reduce potential legal costs, the DfE has produced model legal documentation. In exceptional circumstances, support above this level may be agreed.

What else would not change at Richard Taylor Primary School?

There will be very little that obviously changes in the day to day running of Richard Taylor Primary School. Keeping all that is special about Richard Taylor Primary School whilst allowing us to continue to grow and develop is one of the drivers for academy conversion.

Academies are required to follow the law and guidance on admissions, special educational needs and exclusions, as in maintained schools. Academies have to ensure that the school will be at the heart of its community, collaborating and sharing facilities and expertise with other schools and the wider community.

The governors are committed to retaining our existing name – Richard Taylor Church of England Primary School – within the new academy structure. There are no plans to alter the school uniform or dates of school holidays and, importantly, we expect continuity of Headteacher.

What is a Multi Academy Trust (MAT)?

A MAT is the structure that allows more than one academy to work together under an academy trust. It has one overall board of directors which runs the trust, with each academy having its own local governing body.

The MAT gives us the chance to share knowledge and teaching and learning between schools. It gives the schools within the trust the opportunity to make collective decisions about contracts with strategic partners thereby releasing more money for teaching and learning.

