Forefield Community Infant and Nursery School

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Headteacher: Mrs E. Haney

'We A.S.P.I.R.E to Learn and Grow Together'

14th June 2023

Dear Parents and Carers,

CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED ACADEMY CONVERSION AND FORMING A MULTI ACADEMY TRUST (MAT)

Following many months of research, the Governors at Forefield Community Infant and Nursery School have taken a decision to consider applying for academy status and to form a Multi Academy Trust (MAT). We also propose that the following schools will convert to academies and join the MAT.

- Forefield Community Infant & Nursery School – *our school*
- Chesterfield High School - *currently an established single academy trust (SAT)*
- Waterloo Primary School
- Valewood Primary School
- Forefield Junior School
- Rowan Park School (this also includes The Rowan Tree and Rowan High School).

As Chesterfield High School is the only school to have academy status amongst the schools proposing to become part of the MAT, it is intended to use their company registration as a matter of convenience and to reduce costs. The Multi- Academy Trust will have a new name, mission and vision that is agreed by all.

Chesterfield High School has made a formal application to convert to a MAT; the schools named above have been cited as becoming part of the MAT if the proposed changes are approved by the Regional Director.

The current educational climate is changing, and many schools nationally are choosing to take advantage of academy status. Many schools wish to make the move now to determine their own destiny and to make the changes when it is right for their own school.

As a consequence of the national picture and continued debate and growth of academies in England, the governors have spent some time looking more closely into whether an academy model would be in the best interests of the children, teachers and staff at Forefield Community Infant and Nursery School. The governors are keen that Forefield Community Infant and Nursery School has full control of when and how they go forward with academy status, without pressure from Government departments. As one of a number of schools currently considering academy status, our governors consider that joining the trust now will be a positive step for the school.

We anticipate that the Trust would be known as 'Mersey View Learning Trust', but each school would each keep its own name, logo and uniform. The overarching purpose for taking this step is to enhance the support and opportunities that our pupils receive. Working as part of a larger entity will give us the opportunity to share excellent practice across a range of schools and access high quality staff development opportunities. We should also enjoy the greater purchasing power of a larger group.

The proposal is that Forefield Community Infant and Nursery School converts to academy status and form a Multi Academy Trust (Mersey View Learning Trust) on 1st March 2024.

QUESTIONS AND FEEDBACK

We are engaging with parents, carers, staff, governors and the wider community on the proposals to convert to academy status and form a MAT.

The consultation period will run from **14th June 2023 to 14th July 2023.**

We have organised an information sharing drop-in session for parents/carers to take place at the school on **Thursday 29th June 2023 at 5.00 pm – 6.00pm**. The session will be an opportunity to ask questions about the proposal and how this will affect the school and your child(ren). Governors and school leadership will be available to talk to you and you will also be able to register your comments, queries and any thoughts on opportunities or concerns.

Information sharing drop-in sessions will also be held with parents/ carers at the schools proposing to convert and become part of the MAT to be known as 'Mersey View Learning Trust'.

We have included a feedback form (Appendix A) with this letter - we would be grateful if you could submit any responses to the governors by **4.00pm on Friday 14th July 2023** by email at Consultation@forefieldinfant.sefton.school. You can also leave any paper feedback forms in the box at the school office, forms received will be kept anonymous. We would welcome any questions, comments, or concerns you may have.

We also enclose a copy of some frequently asked questions, which you may find of interest. Information about the consultation and the feedback form can be found at https://www.forefieldinfantschool.co.uk/ under the academy consultation section of the school website. Any future information, feedback received or responses can also be found on this website. The consultation letter will be available on the school website (under the academy consultation section) on 14th June 2023.

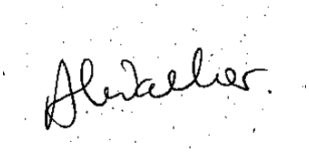
In order for us to gather as broad and deep a range of opinions as possible, we strongly urge you to participate by attending the meeting. If you are unable to attend the meeting, but would like further information you can contact school in the following ways:

- Telephone: 01519246235
- Email: Consultation@forefieldinfant.sefton.school
- Suggestions box: Leave paper feedback in the school office at the main entrance.

Finally, we would like to thank you for your continued support of Forefield Community Infant and Nursery School. We are proud of our wonderful school, and we are committed to ensuring that we provide the very best for our pupils.

Yours faithfully,





Mrs Elaine D Haney
Headteacher

Mrs Alex Walker
Chair of Governors

Appendix A: _CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED ACADEMY CONVERSION AND FORM A MULTI ACADEMY TRUST

Q1. Please confirm the status that best describes you: (Please select one)

- ☐ A member of school staff
- ☐ A pupil at the school
- ☐ A parent or carer of a pupil
- ☐ A member of the community
- ☐ A school governor
- ☐ Other (Please specify)

……..

Q2. Do you support the proposal for Forefield Community Infant and Nursery School to convert to academy status and form a multi academy trust (MAT)? (Please select one)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know

Q3. Do you agree that the Secretary of State should enter into a Funding Agreement (contract) for Forefield Community Infant and Nursery School? (Please select one). To understand more about what is a Funding Agreement log onto https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academy-and-free-school-funding-agreements-multi-academy-trust

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know

Q4. Any other comments or questions? (Please write in)

Thank you for your comments!
Please return this form to the School Office (Reception) or send by email to Consultation@forefieldinfant.sefton.school by 4.00pm on 14th July 2023.

Converting to an Academy - FAQs

WHY ARE WE LOOKING AT COVERTING TO ACADEMY STATUS AND BECOMING PART OF A MULTI ACADEMY TRUST?

1. **What is an academy?** Academy schools are state funded schools in England, which are directly funded by central government (specifically, the Department for Education) and independent of direct funding and control by the local authority. Academies are inspected by Ofsted under the same framework as maintained schools. Academies are self-governing.

2. **What is a Multi-Academy Trust?**
   A Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) is a charitable company limited by guarantee which is formed to oversee a group of schools who are academies. The MAT is the employer of staff and holds the land and buildings of each academy in Trust.

3. **How does governance work?**
   There will be a Board of Trustees who are ultimately responsible for the work of the trust and the academies. However, they devolve much of the responsibility to the individual academies and their respective local governing body. Each academy has its own governing body who work with the academy Headteacher to check that the academy is making good progress and add additional challenge and scrutiny to the work of the school. The academy Headteacher is always a governor for the time they are employed in that role. The governing board works with the Senior Team to set the vision for the academy in line with the overall commitment of the multi academy trust. The governing body in partnership with the Senior Team produce a draft improvement plan for approval by the Trust Board. The governing body has delegated powers from the Trust Board including the management of property and the appointment of staff. A representative of the governing body will represent the school in Trust discussions over Finance and keep other members of the board up to date.

4. **What is the role of the MAT Chief Executive Officer?**
   They are the Accounting Officer for the trust and the strategic support for schools. The CEO is the key contact for the Regional Director and the DfE and acts as the point of first contact to ensure schools are not distracted from their core purpose of teaching and learning.

5. **What are the benefits of being a MAT?**
   In the school's opinion the benefits include:

   - We remain in charge of our destiny
   - The Local Authority (LA) capacity is limited. Pooling the resources of a number of schools means we can re-create some of the services once received from the LA
   - Opportunities to share expertise and best practice
   - Economies of scale when it comes to purchasing goods and services
   - High quality staff development opportunities

6. **Why are we considering converting to an academy and becoming part of MAT now?**
   The current educational climate is changing and many schools nationally are choosing to take advantage of academy status. Many schools wish to make the move now to determine their own destiny and to make the changes when it is right for their own school. Governors feel that now is the right time to take this forward.

7. **What parents and carers need to know?**
   - The school is not proposing to change its character and will continue to look, feel and be the same as it is now.
   - The School Leadership Team and Governing Body will continue to run the school daily as they do now, and parents will continue to be represented on the Governing Body.
   - The name of the school will not change.

- Children with special needs will continue to receive additional support in the way they do now.
- Our local schools will continue to work very closely together for each other as well as your children and will be provided with more support to help them become even better.
- The multi-academy trust arrangements will share some central services across the schools which will help them be more efficient and make sure that funding is focused on teaching, learning and support for children.
- The multi-academy trust will work very closely and co-operatively with local partners, including other schools, community groups and organisations, and the local authority.

8. **Mersey View Learning Trust**
   Mersey View Learning Trust is a place:

   - Where all leaders are aspirational and ambitious for all in our community to create learning environments which are happy, safe and enthusiastic about learning.

   - Instinctive and responsive to the needs of all members of our community and will have dynamic responses to change the lives of our learners.

   - Collaborating to create communities of learning which focus on inclusive education, built on the shared values of Respect and Equity.

   - Communities of learning which focus on sharing what we do best, both academically and pastorally, supporting, challenging and inspiring our pupils and staff.

   - Investing in creating learning environments which inspire create curiosity and innovations and explorations of the world so individuals take responsibility to be visible global citizens.

   - To invest and participate in research based led professional development programmes which allow staff to confidently develop their own practice and share success; across our learning community and cross phase.

   - To provide enrichment and vocational opportunities to ensure that individuals are fully prepared for the wider world and be able to make independent decisions about their future and having the resilience to do so.

   - Effective strategic leadership which resources opportunities for all school improvement work and the core educational services needed for success and breakdown barriers.

   Mersey View Non-negotiables are:

   - Children come first in every decision – heart of any decisions

   - Student voice is central and valued

   - Relationships based on mutual respect

   - CEO involved in all our schools

   - Local governance

   - Salaries – in line with Green/Burgundy books

   - Pensions protected – no detrimental change

   - Retain school's curriculum

- Retain school's ethos, identity and uniform as a representation of that
- Maintaining control of own budget
- Control over school building/premises development

9. **Is an academy like a business?**
   No. A business makes profit for its shareholders. An academy is a charitable trust which cannot make profit.

10. **Who makes the decision to become an academy?**
    The governing body/Board of Trustees. The Department for Education then approve the request.

11. **Are academies bound by the same rules and regulations as other schools?**
    Academies are required to follow the law and guidance on admissions, special educational needs and exclusions.

12. **What are the advantages of becoming an academy?** In addition to the advantages mentioned above, as governors and headteacher of Forefield Community Infant and Nursery School, we believe that the opportunity to work together with new partners and schools to ensure standards across the trust are consistently high, is an exciting new proposition. We will, however, continue to actively work with all local schools and current partners, ensuring the best of both worlds. Academy status will not change the things that work so well for our school.

13. **Are there any disadvantages to becoming a MAT?**
    As a MAT, the central board of directors will be accountable for any other academies that join the MAT. This means increased responsibility. However, as part of the conversion process, the governing body will ensure that careful decisions are taken to ensure that the right governance structure and systems are in place to successfully operate more than one academy.

14. **What are the disadvantages of becoming an academy?** As an academy, there are a number of additional responsibilities placed on the school in terms of financial management and reporting. It is expected that, on a day-to-day basis, the pupils and their parents and carers, teachers and staff will not notice the difference when we become an academy. There will also be additional work for members of staff in the school office.

WHAT DAY-TO-DAY CHANGES WILL HAPPEN?

15. **Will a move to academy status mean a new name for the academy?** No. The school will continue to be called Forefield Community Infant and Nursery School.

16. **Would becoming an academy mean a new uniform?** No. Parents will not need to buy a new uniform.

17. **Will the school still be open to the community if it becomes an academy?** Yes. There will be no change to the current provision and use of the school by different groups to hold events.

18. **What will be the impact on our children with special needs?** There will be no change to the level of support provided. Forefield Community Infant and Nursery School will continue to recognise that every child is different and has the right to be included as a valued, respected and equal member of the school community.

19. **Will the school hours be any different as an academy?**
    Although it is highly unlikely that the school day will be changed, the MAT Trust Board will have the power to makes changes. This decision is usually delegated to the local governing body of an academy, however, so there is no real change from our authority in this regard. As is the case now, parents would be consulted prior to any change in school hours, although no change is envisaged.

20. **The priority for our school is the education of young people. How will you ensure that the MAT and academy formation does not distract us from this?**
    Part of the work of the MAT, is to carry out 'due diligence' exercises which will make clear which schools need extra support to convert and not be distracted and which schools can move quickly through the process. It's important that all schools are open about the amount of support they might need to enter into and go through the process.

21. **Will there be any changes to the Curriculum?**
    No, we would be expected to continue to offer the full range of National Curriculum subjects. We will continue to ensure that what we teach is relevant to our pupils and their specific needs and continues to be broad and balanced.

WHAT WILL THIS MEAN FOR OUR SCHOOL FINANCES?

22. **What about funding?**
    The Department for Education via the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) meets the running costs for an academy. Academy funding is calculated on a like-for-like basis with local authority schools. Therefore, the academy will have a similar budget to when it was a maintained school. We would have greater freedom to procure services from other providers. In a MAT there are further opportunities to realise cost efficiencies across the network and the academy will be able to make more efficient use of resources to support school improvement. Like other schools, an academy cannot run at a loss or agree a deficit budget, i.e., it has to break-even.

23. **How will the school be accountable financially?**
    An academy is governed by the rules and regulations for charitable trusts and company law, e.g., we will be required to produce and file accounts and trustees cannot be paid. There will be robust systems with an audit conducted by an external independent auditor.

24. **Does this improve on current funding arrangements?**
    Converting to an academy will not be to our detriment financially. There may be the potential for some financial gain; however, any decision taken is not motivated by money. Funding is available to cover the costs of the conversion process itself, which is provided by central government once the decision to convert has been approved. We will also have opportunities to support other schools and to benefit financially from doing so. In addition, the MAT board has access to capacity funding from the Department for Education as well as opportunities to bid for capital funding on an annual basis.

WHAT WILL THIS MEAN FOR TEACHERS AND STAFF?

25. **What are the terms and conditions for staff?** On conversion to academy status, teachers and staff employed by Sefton LA will transfer with the same terms and conditions, via a formal TUPE (transfer of undertakings protection of employment) process. In addition, conversion will not affect any union memberships.

26. **Who will employ teachers and staff following conversion?** At present, Forefield Community Infant and Nursery School teachers and staff are employed by Sefton LA. Following academy conversion to MAT, teachers and staff will be employed directly by the MAT to be known as 'Mersey View Learning Trust'.

27. **Will Mersey View Learning Trust employ non-qualified teachers?** All class groups of pupils will be registered to a qualified teacher, as is the case in schools currently.

WHAT WILL THIS MEAN FOR STANDARDS?

28. **Will Mersey View Learning Trust have the capacity to support our educational standards?** The MAT to be known as 'Mersey View Learning Trust' will establish its own school improvement capacity for those schools choosing to become an academy. The trust will have a school improvement lead and will regularly use education consultants.

Collectively, the team will be experienced and qualified to support and challenge schools in data analysis, teaching, behaviour, safeguarding, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, special educational needs and disabilities, and leadership and management. The school improvement package will include support and challenge for governance.

29. **How will an academy raise achievement?** It is anticipated that the MAT to be known as 'Mersey View Learning Trust' will be structured to challenge and support schools in equal measure. We would receive a number of days of school improvement support from the school improvement lead, irrespective of whether the school is outstanding or inadequate.

    These visits are not inspections but an opportunity for senior leaders to benchmark their judgments through shared lesson observation, work scrutiny, analysis of data, supported self-evaluation and school improvement planning. Indeed, the outcome of these visits will confirm the development of the school.

    Mersey View Learning Trust will intervene rapidly in schools that are underperforming or on a downward trajectory based on OFSTED criteria.