

4<sup>th</sup> October 2013

Dear Parents,

**Re: Consultation on possible conversion to academy status**

You are probably aware that academies have been high on the government agenda for some time and schools are being increasingly encouraged to convert to academy status.

As a governing body we have taken this issue very seriously and after careful consideration believe that conversion to academy status under a multi academy trust (MAT) would be the best option for securing the future of Redmile CE Primary School and maintaining the quality of our children's education. As a result we feel that now is the appropriate time to consult with you before making a final decision on this very important issue. The MAT which we are proposing to join is the Leicestershire Academies Charitable Trust set up by the Diocese as this would enable us to maintain our existing ethos, governance and staffing structures which are an important part of our school.

The governors are keen to hear your views on the possible change to multi academy trust status as part of our decision making process. We enclose a list of frequently asked questions about academy status and a response form you may wish to use to express your views or ask any questions you may have. The response form should be returned by [01/11/2013](#).

On this basis, we would like to invite you to a consultation [evening at 7.30 pm on Wednesday 16th October 2013](#) at Redmile School to enable you to find out more about the benefits conversion to a MAT could bring to our school and our pupils. The evening will commence with a short presentation followed by a question and answer session.

At the end of the consultation period, the governing body will meet again to make its decision on the issue of conversion and what is in the best interest of our school and our children and will notify you of that decision as soon as possible.

This poses an exciting opportunity for us and we hope that you will offer your views on this very important matter.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs J V Hopkins

Head teacher

Mrs C Lobo

Chair of governors

# Redmile Church of England Primary School Academy Consultation

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Q. How is an Academy different to a Local Authority Maintained School?**

- An Academy is accountable to the Department of Education (DfE) and other regulatory bodies such as OfSTED and Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA), but is no longer accountable to the Local Authority (LA).
- An academy receives all its funding directly instead of some of it going to the LA.

### **Q. Why is Redmile CE Primary School considering conversion to academy status now?**

- There are many benefits of conversion to academy status, as outlined below. In addition to this, changes to the way in which Local Authorities are funded and managed have meant that cut backs have been made in services that LAs are able to provide to Schools. We have already seen cut backs in services that Leicestershire LA previously made available to Redmile Primary School.
- Redmile CE Primary was judged as a Good School with Outstanding features in its last Ofsted inspection. The government first allowed outstanding schools to become academies. The policy widened to incorporate 'failing schools' to be academies sponsored by outstanding school academies. More recently, the government agreed that Good Schools with Outstanding features can become stand-alone academies, thus the Secretary of State would agree in principle to Redmile Primary School becoming an academy.
- Leicestershire Diocese has recently developed its own model of a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) called the Leicestershire Academies Charitable Trust (LACT). An Academy Trust is a charitable company set up in order to manage an academy. A MAT is a group of academies coming together to ensure structured local collaboration and strength of economy. It is overseen by a board of Directors which takes on responsibility for among other things, maintaining educational standards across its member academies. A proportion of funding for individual academies is retained by the MAT to cover the services that it provides for its member academies. As a Church School, Redmile CE Primary already has close links with the Diocese and is already subject to inspection and regulation by the Diocese. Having considered all the options, the view of the Governors is that joining the Diocesan LACT is the best way forward for Redmile School, should a final decision be made to convert to academy status.

### **Q. Will Redmile Primary School convert to academy status and if so when?**

- No decision will be made without considering all comments or representations which are made about the proposal during this consultation period. The decision to convert rests entirely with the Governing Body which will consider the views of all interested parties. As a church school, the governors also need permission from the Diocese to convert to academy status. If the decision is made to convert, our aim would be to complete the conversion process during the academic year 2013/14.

### **Q. How would greater involvement of the Diocese affect Redmile CE School?**

- As stated above, Redmile CE Primary School is already subject to some regulation by the Diocese. The Diocesan LACT has been set up in order to support member academies and will aim to provide many of the services that were previously available from the LA. The Diocese would not have any greater involvement in the day to day running of Redmile CE School than it does currently. The Governing Body and the Head Teacher would continue to lead and manage the School in the same way as they do now.

**Q. What *could* change if Redmile CE Primary School were to take on academy status?**

According to the Government, if a school becomes an academy it *could* benefit from and enjoy:

- Freedom from local authority (LA) control
- The ability to set their own pay and conditions for staff
- Freedom from following the National Curriculum
- Greater control of their budget
- Greater opportunities for formal collaboration with other public and private organizations
- Freedom to change the length of terms and school days
- School has to procure services that were previously organised by the LA
- Freedom to spend the money the local authority currently spends on their behalf
- Freedom for academies in the way they engage in local partnerships

**Q. What day to day changes might I see?**

- Pupils and parents would see no change to the day to day running of the school. Our school ethos and key values are really important to us and we are fully committed to ensuring these would not change. We have worked really hard to develop a curriculum that is interesting and relevant for our children and this is reflected in the year on year results. All the unique aspects of Redmile CE Primary School would continue.

**Q. Will Academy Status change what Redmile CE Primary School pupils learn?**

- The Department for Education have stated that an academy is not bound to follow the National Curriculum, and may follow its own curriculum as long as it is "broad and balanced". Academies must teach English, Maths, Science and RE. The staff and Governors of Redmile CE Primary School are committed to continuing to provide a rich and varied curriculum which meets the needs of the pupils.

**Q. Would our school name change?**

- We are extremely proud of our school name, logo, vision and mission statement. There would be no plans to change the school name unless stakeholders (including parents and carers asked for a consultation on this).

**Q. Will there be any financial cost/ benefit to the School of converting to an academy?**

- The government is clear that becoming an academy should not bring about a financial advantage or disadvantage to a school. Academies will continue to be funded at a level comparable to that of maintained schools. However, academies have greater freedom with how they use their budgets, allowing the school to decide how to spend its money and where to make savings. All schools and colleges converting to academy status will receive a flat rate grant of £25,000 to help cover any costs incurred during the change-over process such as legal and accountancy fees.

**Q. What tangibles benefits are there of having academy status?**

- The greater financial and academic freedoms afforded by academy status are seen as a positive improvement. However the difference is that the governing body of a local authority school reports to the local authority, while in academies the Trust reports to the Secretary of State. Many commentators have labelled this as 'control', so in effect by converting a school moves from local authority control to central government control.

**Q. Will this give Redmile Primary School more freedom from the Local Authority?**

- Yes. Redmile Primary School will no longer be maintained by the LA and as such will not be accountable to the LA. All funding will be directly received from The Young People's

Learning Agency (YPLA). The Department for Education confirms that an academy is free to choose where to source services required. The school may wish to continue to buy some services and supplies from the LA. However it is expected that with the austerity savings the LA has to make and their reduced level of funding in the future, the LA may struggle to maintain the diverse nature and number of services and retain their staff at current levels. Members of a MAT such as the LACT will benefit from some centrally provided services while still retaining a greater level of flexibility in sourcing other services.

**Q. Does the Governing Body (GB) have to be reconfigured if Academy status is approved?**

- Yes. The existing Governing Body would need to be dissolved having determined who among them would wish to be members of the Academy Trust and who would wish to be governors of the Academy Trust (note that it is possible to be both a member of Academy Trust and governor). Staff and parents would still be represented on the GB and it would continue to have strategic responsibility for the running of Redmile CE Primary School. It is anticipated that all existing governors will be accommodated on the Governing Body of the Academy Trust

**Q. What will be the responsibilities of the Governing Body?**

- The individual members of the present Governing Body will be responsible for establishing the Academy Trust. The Academy Trust (a charitable company limited by guarantee) will then enter into a funding agreement with the Secretary of State for the running of the academy. The Academy Trust will have members (those who set up the Academy Trust) who are then responsible for appointing the Governors of the Academy. The responsibilities of the new Governing Body will be broadly similar to the current ones.

**Q. Would the academy still undergo Ofsted inspections?**

- Yes, we will still be subject to routine Ofsted inspections. All schools and academies will continue to be monitored to ensure that a broad and balanced curriculum is maintained and further developed.

**Q. What will happen to admissions?**

- School and the Governing Body have no plans to change the admissions criteria for the school. Governors set the criteria in compliance with the national admissions code. Local Authorities continue to have overall responsibility for ensuring that there are sufficient places. Applications for school places will continue to be made to the LA. Academies will be notified of all applications for their school and will then be required to coordinate admissions on a school level.

**Q. Would the cost of school dinners change?**

- The price of dinners is fixed by the Food Support Service. This would continue to be the same.

**Q. Would the uniform change?**

- There are no plans to make any changes to the uniform unless, of course, parents and stakeholders request it.

**Q. Would there be greater charges for trips?**

- At present Governors ask parents and carers to voluntarily contribute to cover the costs of visits and trips, which are also subsidised by Viking Challenge funds. Without these contributions trips would be unable to go ahead.

**Q. Would holidays change?**

- The term dates are currently set as an authority with individual discretion for schools to select dates for the 5 training days every year. We understand parents with siblings in different schools prefer holidays to be the same and would therefore try to keep in line with neighbouring schools as much as possible. The very close partnerships we already have with other local schools would not change and indeed would be enhanced.

**Q. What would happen if we didn't take on academy status?**

- Leicestershire Authority will no longer provide services and support to schools as they have in the past. Thus all schools will have to pay for such services and support. If we stay a Local Authority maintained school, a 'top-slice' of our school funding will continue to go to the LA, but on top of that we would need to buy-in services that were previously provided 'free' by the LA. This will mean that paying for these additional services would eat into our already tight budget and require us to reduce our expenditure elsewhere, which may compromise essential learning opportunities in the long run. If we take on academy status within the MAT many of the services we require will be included in their 'top-slicing' in a similar way to how the LA used to operate.

**Q. How many other schools have converted to academy status?**

- There are now over 3,300 academies open in the UK with many more in the process of conversion. As of 1<sup>st</sup> October 2013 there are 71 primary schools in Leicestershire that have converted to academy status, a full list of converter schools can be found at [http://www.leics.gov.uk/index/education/information\\_about\\_schools/academies\\_in\\_leicestershire.htm](http://www.leics.gov.uk/index/education/information_about_schools/academies_in_leicestershire.htm)

**Q. Where can I find further information about academies?**

- Come to the School consultation evening on 16<sup>th</sup> October.
- Please feel free to contact School with any specific queries that you have.
- Leicestershire County Council FAQs for parents:  
[http://www.leics.gov.uk/index/education/information\\_about\\_schools/academies\\_in\\_leicestershire/academies\\_in\\_leicestershire\\_faqs.htm](http://www.leics.gov.uk/index/education/information_about_schools/academies_in_leicestershire/academies_in_leicestershire_faqs.htm)
- DfE general information about academies:  
<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/academies>

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