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5<sup>th</sup> January 2023

Dear Parents, Carers and Staff,

**Consultation to Convert to Academy Status**

You may be aware that in 2022 the Government white paper had set out plans for all local authority schools to be in a multi academy trust by 2030 and has encouraged all schools to consider converting to Academy status.

This letter is to inform you that after careful consideration and preliminary discussion with the Diocese, the governing members of the Interim Executive Board (IEB) propose that The Saints Federation schools convert to academy status and join the Diocese of Norwich St Benet's Multi Academy Trust. The IEB members believe that this will enable us to continue to improve the opportunities we provide for your children and support the federation in its future development.

We are therefore now writing to consult with staff, parents and other local community partners to determine whether the school should proceed with conversion and we would like to invite your views on the matter.

***What is an Academy?***

Academies are publicly funded state schools that are independent of the Local Authority and receive funding directly from central government. They are free to all children and have to follow the same rules as all other state-funded schools over admissions, pupils with Special Educational Needs and exclusions. They are still inspected by Ofsted.

Our schools will still be Church of England Schools under the authority of the Bishop of Norwich and the religious designation will not change.

***Why is this being considered?***

As Voluntary Aided primary schools, gaining Academy status would give us the ability to continue to develop and strive to achieve the best for our children. As part of a Multi Academy Trust, there will be greater opportunities for working more closely with other local Church of England schools and the wider community of schools.

The Governing members are very aware that as VA schools, we are in the minority within the local area and the last two years of trying to run schools during the pandemic brought home to the school leadership just how isolated and potentially vulnerable we could be as a small, rural stand-alone schools.

***What are the advantages of conversion?***

The Government is clear that the greater freedoms enjoyed by Academies are designed to allow schools to develop and to build on individual strengths in response to the needs of the community. We feel that the additional freedoms and flexibilities would enable the Governing members to better secure the long-term future of our federation schools. The latest NGA report on MAT Governance states that MATs are the most financially secure of all school structure types due to the financial advantages of governance across a group of schools

Executive Headteacher: Miss R. Price



In addition to this we believe that the formal partnership with St Benet's MAT will have a number of benefits for our schools. This includes a more targeted approach to the long-term future of the schools, strengthening our Church of England identity, access to resources which will improve teaching and management practice within the schools as well as a better management of our finances for the benefit of children attending the schools.

***What are the disadvantages of conversion?***

The federation schools will no longer be maintained by the local authority. They will be managed by St Benet's MAT. St Benet's MAT has statutory duties as an academy trust company, and The Saints Federation is confident it can manage these.

***Will any changes to the school be made as a result of conversion?***

We do not intend to make any changes on conversion. You and your child are unlikely to see any change in your day-to-day experience of school. There will be no change to the uniform, the admissions arrangements or to the times of the school day or terms. Leaders, teachers and support staff will remain and have their terms and conditions protected as part of the conversion process. The school will have a governing body and all children on roll at the school will continue to attend.

Please be assured that the distinctive Christian ethos and values and the unique character of our schools would remain unchanged should Academy conversion take place.

Responsibility for leadership and management of each academy remains with the governing body and the Executive Headteacher. St Benet's maintains Local Governing Committees which includes staff and parent governors, in all of its academies. As within any Multi Academy Trust overall responsibility for governance sits with Trustees. There will be elected parent and staff governors.

***How to take part in the consultation process***

We want to know what parents and the local community think about this proposal so we are consulting with everyone associated with our school before the IEB members meet again to make a final decision.

The formal consultation period runs from Monday 20<sup>th</sup> February 2023 to Friday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2023

***How can I find out more?***

In order to hear your views, we have arranged for a meeting to take place at 6.00pm on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2023 at All Saints Primary School, Winfarthing, when IEB members and representatives from St Benet's MAT will be present to meet parents and carers. There will be a virtual link provided for those who attend online. There will also be a meeting with staff at 4.00pm.

If you have any specific comments or questions about the academy conversion or what this will mean for the schools and children, please email the IEB Chair [IEBChair@federationschools.org](mailto:IEBChair@federationschools.org) by 6.00pm on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> February 2023 so that these can be included in the meeting.

Following the consultation period, the Interim Executive Board, with the LA headteachers group, will consider all of the feedback and views received during the consultation and will then make the final decision on whether to complete the academisation process. We look forward to receiving your responses. We will write to you as parents to inform you of the decision.

Yours sincerely,

Kay Swann  
IEB Chair  
The Saints Federation