



Work, play, pray - together

St. Mary's R.C Primary School

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30 April 2018

ASSURING OUR CONTINUED SUCCESS IN THE FUTURE THROUGH CONVERSION TO ACADEMY STATUS AND JOINING NORTHERN SAINTS CATHOLIC EDUCATION TRUST

Dear Parent/Carer,

The Governors of St Mary's RC Primary School recently voted unanimously to join Northern Saints Catholic Education Trust with a proposed conversion date of 1 November 2018.

As you are already aware, St Mary's is a Good school and we wish to build upon our current success by exploring the possibility of becoming an Academy and joining Northern Saints Catholic Education Trust. As a highly effective school, we wish to continually invest in our pupils, and their future, and to do this we need to maintain and repair the fabric of our school building to provide a vibrant and exciting learning environment for our students. Gaining Academy status will allow us to do this.

The Board of Directors at St Joseph's Catholic Academy have also voted unanimously to become part of Northern Saints Catholic Education Trust within the same period of consultation and with a proposed joining date of 1 November 2018.

In joining Northern Saints Catholic Education Trust, St Mary's and St Joseph's will retain their own unique sense of identity. It will however, provide opportunities to further enhance the quality of education provided in our schools for the benefit of our young people.

The development of the Trust with both primary and secondary schools will provide the opportunity for high quality education for catholic families and the communities we serve from early years provision up to and including key stage 5. At a time of increasing financial pressures for individual schools, it will also enable us to preserve and further develop catholic education within South Tyneside and the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle.

In joining the Trust this will also provide opportunities for ongoing professional development and career progression for staff. It is envisaged that this will continue and be further enhanced as the Trust grows.

Over the last twelve to eighteen months, the Headteacher and Governing Body have been exploring the impact of Academy status and the implications for our school. We would now like to hear the views of our pupils, parents/carers, staff, parish and the wider community.

Consultation period

We are therefore commencing formal consultation today, Monday 30 April 2018 for a period of four weeks. Consultation will end at 12 noon on Friday 25 May 2018.

What is an Academy?

An Academy is a state school, funded directly by the Department for Education, instead of the Local Authority, and as a result receives directly the money that the Local Authority has previously spent on its behalf, giving the school more control over its funding and decision making.

Originally, underperforming schools were turned into Academies to help the school improve rapidly, however the Government in 2010 extended the opportunity to convert to academy status to all schools that are successful and performing well such as St Mary's, and as a result there are now over 4,600 academies in the country.

An academy is a charitable trust run by a board of trustees who also act as the Governing Body.

What are the potential benefits for our school within a Multi Academy Trust?

The main benefits of academy status include:

- Access to capital funding which is only available to academies.
- Greater control over our finances and the money due to our school.
- Allowing us the option to partner with other schools in a more formalised way
- Educational benefits for our pupils as a result of additional freedoms available to Academies in terms of the curriculum we offer, and how we prioritise our resources.
- The option to work in closer partnership with other schools, and share expertise and services that will benefit all of our pupils and staff.
- Sharing resources and expertise, alongside the additional funding Academy status brings, to allow us to target funding towards improving front line teaching and learning.
- Joined up provision to remove barriers to learning.
- Develop our own solutions collaboratively.

What additional responsibilities will academy status bring?

- Additional financial and legal responsibilities as a result of forming a company limited by guarantee.
- The Trust would employ our staff rather than the Governing Body of the school.
- The Trust would be responsible for admissions rather than the Governing Body of the school.

- The Trust would enter into a 125-year lease for the land currently owned by the Local Authority. The Diocese own the buildings and the Trust enter into something called a supplemental agreement with the Diocese to protect the use of the buildings. We already have responsibility for the cost of maintaining the land and buildings.
- Additional responsibilities in planning the services previously delivered by the Local Authority – however this is happening anyway as a result of cuts in Local Authority services.

How do I respond to the consultation?

Our Governing Body would value your opinion. We will be holding a drop in session, attended by the Headteacher and a representatives of the Governing Body on Friday the 4th of May from 9am, Wednesday the 16th of May OR please contact the school office.

The aim of the drop in session is to hear your views and answer any questions you might have. We have published a list of frequently asked questions on our school website, for any parent/ carer who wishes to know more.

Finally, we have provided a consultation response sheet attached to this letter. If you wish to provide a written response to the consultation, please return this to the Main Reception.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs M Graham
Headteacher

Mr K Nicol
Chair of Governors

St Mary's RC Primary School Academy Consultation Feedback Form

Please let us know your views regarding whether our school should become an Academy, and join Northern Saints Catholic Education Trust.

Name.....

Contact details.....

Parent/guardian

Staff

Resident

Other

Your written response should be handed in at the Main Reception and marked "Private and Confidential) by no later than **12.00 noon on Friday 25 May 2018**.

Thank you for taking the time to respond to the consultation.