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Friday 7th September 2018

Parent Consultation on Academy Status

Dear Parents/Carers

We are writing to inform you of a very important development for our federation. School Governors have been considering the long term future of the federation and have been monitoring the ever-changing economic and political situation with regard to Education at both a local authority, and national level, in order to best protect our schools and the quality of education we provide our young people.

Following lengthy discussions and fact-finding the Governors have voted unanimously to pursue academy status for both Boston St Thomas CE Primary and Wyberton Primary. Evaluating all considerations, governors see this arrangement as a pragmatic solution that will enable the schools to sustain their widely recognised ethos, whilst providing the best possible education for our children.

However, this is not a final decision and we intend to go through a consultation process with you before making a final commitment. We would like to outline to you the main reasons behind this decision and the next steps in the process.

What is the Government's Agenda?

Academy status for schools has been a progressive agenda under Conservative, Labour and the Coalition administrations over more than 20 years, delivering greater autonomy and self-governance for state schools. The "direction of travel" towards independence has been consistent and it continues to feature as one of the Government's main agendas. Recently, a majority of Government initiatives and grants have been aimed at the academy sector and as a federation we would like to be able to benefit from some of this additional funding and opportunities.

What are the benefits of our schools becoming academies?

1. Securing our future

Schools are constantly under pressure to ensure that we remain financially viable. Across the country (some in this county) hundreds of schools have closed. Other areas are seeing larger schools including Secondary Schools "taking over" schools or schools being forced into working partnerships based solely on easing financial constraints. Our schools are at the heart of their communities and it is essential that we are in full control of our own future. We believe strongly in the benefits of working

with other schools but we need to ensure that it is on a mutually beneficial basis and that the federation makes its own decision about who to work with and when and that we don't have our hand forced. We also need to ensure that when we work with others they are fully committed to both giving and receiving support.

The government are going to look to cut costs further in the future and have already talked of larger, successful schools taking a role in managing and guiding others. If we become an Academy, we are establishing and meeting the current main government agenda and proving that we are proactive in moving the schools into a position of strength for the future. We would also be offered security by becoming a trust run school, which would run alongside the Governing Body. This, along with having the land registry and land rental agreements transferred to us, would offer us protection from radical changes.

2. Multi-Academy Trust (MATs)

The federation is looking to convert and join a Multi-Academy Trust. A multi-academy trust is a group of two or more academies that agree to work together under an over-arching trust body drawn from members of each of the Governing bodies with a remit to coordinate matters of common interest across all the schools. There are many existing and well-established Multi-Academy trusts in our area and the Governors have looked at a number of these. However, the Governors wanted to ensure they were able to join a Trust that was still in its infancy so that they could shape and steer the direction of the Trust ensuring that the ethos and aims of the federation were maintained and we were part of the Trust's early development. Therefore, the Governors have been in discussion with Gipsey Bridge Academy and Spilsby Primary Academy to join with them as part of the Infinity Academies Trust creating a Trust of four schools initially. As you know Mr Booth was previously the Executive Headteacher of these schools and therefore we know the schools and people are a good match for our vision, values and approach to education. The Infinities Academies Trust is in the process of becoming a Church of England Multi-Academy Trust. This will enable both Community schools and Church of England schools to join the Trust. It is important to stress that being part of a Church of England MAT does not in any way affect Wyberton or any future community schools that may join the MAT. Wyberton would continue to run and operate as they always have with no changes to their approach to religion or the teaching of RE. However, by joining a Church of England Trust it allows us to work with a wide variety of different types of schools as Church of England schools are not permitted to join non-Church of England MATs.

As our schools serve many different local Secondary schools it was felt that to go into partnership with any one of these directly may impact on our relationship with the others. Further benefits of being part of a Multi-Academy Trust include the sharing of good practice and expertise for the benefit of our children, procuring better value services, professional development opportunities for staff and inter-school links for children. At this point in time, we are in a position to choose the partnership that works best for us, so we are in control of our own future. We want to be leading and at the forefront of this development, rather than catching up later and finding that our options are limited.

3. Finance

Currently, the school does not receive the whole of its budget as provided by the Department for Education (DfE) as Lincolnshire County Council retain some of it to fund some central services for all

schools in the county. However, it is important for us to consider and evaluate the value we get from these services, how much we use them and if they could be procured elsewhere. As a successful federation that has few significant issues the input we receive from the Local Authority is minimal. So to a certain extent we contribute to services that we do not use. As a federation, we are “Prime Account” schools and therefore for several years have completely managed our own budgets, used our own accounting software and maintained our own accounts. In many respects we are closer to being an academy than we are a maintained Local Authority school.

Also, over the last few years more of the Local Authority services have moved to a “traded model” where schools are required to pay additionally for them from the budget that they receive. As a school we feel that if we had access to our entire budget we could pick and choose the services that provide us with the best quality and the best value. There are many good services offered by the Local Authority and we are still able to “buy back” into these as an Academy but there are also good services offered by third parties that we could use as well.

Financially, our school will not gain significantly from the academy conversion process but what it will do is allow us more freedom about the services we choose to engage with and enable us to achieve even greater value for money. This will in turn ensure we have more to spend in the classroom and on the children of the Federation as our budget will come directly to us from the Department for Education and we will be eligible to bid for specific new initiatives and grants targeted at academies.

4. Increased independence- shaping a learning experience that’s right for us.

At the heart of everything we do is the desire to achieve the very best for each and every one of our pupils. We believe that in the current climate the freedoms offered to us as an Academy allow us to be able to further shape our curriculum, our teaching methods and our resources to make sure that they match as closely as possible the interests, abilities and backgrounds of the children in our schools.

The federation will continue to be mindful that it is accountable for its end of Key Stage results and these will continue to be published and ensure that we are preparing children for the next phase in their learning. Ofsted would still regularly inspect the school ensuring that standards are being maintained and that pupils are being appropriately taught and challenged.

What does this mean for my child?

Our schools will retain their character and will continue to look, feel and be the same as they are now with no significant changes to the school uniform, school name, school times, holiday pattern and admission policy. Most of the changes will be behind the scenes. The MAT organisation does not affect your choice of school for your child. We will continue to work closely with all our local schools, as we do now. Transition between schools will be unaffected by the proposed changes. An Executive Headteacher, Head of School and Governing Board will continue to lead our federation on a daily basis as they do now and parents will continue to be represented on the Governing Board. The MAT arrangements will share some 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

What's next?

The Local Authority has been informed of the Governors' provisional decision to pursue academy status. You are invited to send comments, questions, and concerns as part of the Parents Consultation process by letter or e-mail to the Executive Headteacher and Chair of Governors. E-mails should be sent to jackie.hawkesworth@gofederation.co.uk and letters sent to the main office of your school addressed for the attention of the Chair of Governors. Once we have received your comments we will decide on the best way to share the questions we receive and our responses with all parents. This may be via a Frequently Asked Questions letter that we will send out towards the end of the consultation or through a Parent meeting in the week beginning the 1st October or a combination of both. We will ensure you are provided with the information in the best possible way and give you advanced notice of any meetings. The consultation with parents will end on Friday 5th October. All correspondence relating to the consultation can also be found on our website here: www.gofederation.co.uk/news.asp

Yours sincerely,



Gavin Booth
Executive Head Teacher



Sue Brackenbury
Chair of Governors