



Eastway Primary School
Rossall Road, Moreton,
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Bringing Learning to Life

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Dear Parents and Carers,

At a recent Governing body meeting, the Diocese of Chester provided information to the Board of Governors on the Diocese's Multi-Academy Trust (Chester Diocesan Academies Trust - CDAT), which is being offered to schools within the region who wish to take advantage of an Academy model.

Rationale

As a consequence of the national picture, continued debate and growth of academies in England, the Board of Governors have decided to now look more closely into whether an academy model would be in the best interests of the children, staff and families at Eastway Primary School. The Governors are keen that Eastway 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, Governors consider that joining CDAT now will be a positive step for the school.

Over the past few years the staff of Eastway, Christ Church and Lingham primary schools have been working successfully together as a small group. This hub of three schools would like to continue working together in a more formal partnership, as part of CDAT, to serve the children and families in Moreton.

CDAT

Becoming an academy would give Eastway increased access to support from a partner that we know and with whom we share a common ethos. CDAT have received significant interest from other schools across the region who would like to join the Trust, demand has been especially high from those schools that are judged to be Good or Outstanding. Strengthening our partnerships with these schools would have clear benefits for Eastway and the additional support available through a Trust model would be an advantage of becoming an academy.

Advantages of Academy Status

In addition to the advantages mentioned above, as Governors and Headteacher of Eastway Primary School, we believe that the opportunity to work with new partners and schools to ensure standards across the Trust are consistently high, is an exciting new proposition. However, we will continue to actively work with other local schools and current partners, which ensures the best of both worlds. CDAT has made it clear that academy status will not change all the things that work so well for our school.

Disadvantages of Academy Status

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, parents, carers and staff will not notice any difference. There will be an additional workload for members of staff in the school office however CDAT recognise this and will provide the school with a significant amount of support from specialists who will pick up the majority of this additional work.

Questions and Feedback

We know that the debate around academies is especially predominant at the moment and would like to make sure that the entire school community has an opportunity to ask questions about what academy status means for Eastway. We are therefore holding a meeting where we would welcome the opportunity to talk to you about academy status. The meeting will be held as follows:

Drop-in Q&A Session: Tuesday 16th May 2016 at either 9.15am or 6pm in the School Hall.

We have included a feedback form with this letter and would be grateful if you could return to us by 25th May 2017 with any questions, comments, or concerns you may have. You can also complete an online survey available at: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/RHR3MKD>

You can leave your feedback forms in the box at reception and forms received will be kept completely anonymous.

Additional Information

We have included some additional information with this letter:

- An outline of the CDAT Vision (information also available at www.cdat.co.uk)
- A Frequently Asked Questions Document

Finally, we would like to thank you for your continued support of Eastway Primary School. We believe that we have a truly wonderful school and are committed to ensuring we provide the very best for our children and families.

Yours sincerely,



Anthony Bestwick
Chair of Governors

Deborah Marchant
Headteacher

Feedback Form - Let us know your views!

- 1 Do you support the decision for the school to become an academy?
- ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
 - ☐ Not sure

Comments:

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- 2 The proposal is that the school will be an Academy within Chester Diocesan Academies Trust. Do you agree with this partnership arrangement?
- ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
 - ☐ Not sure

Comments:

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- 3 Do you have concerns about this proposal? If so what are they?
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- 4 Please indicate whether you are:
- ☐ A member of school staff
 - ☐ A pupil at the school
 - ☐ A parent/carer of a pupil
 - ☐ A member of the community
 - ☐ A school governor
 - ☐ Other (Please specify)

Thank you for your comments!

Please return this form to the School Office (Reception) by 25th May 2017.

CDAT has a distinctive ethos that is clearly rooted in the Gospel. Christian values impact on every area of our work and are communicated and shared in such a way that all member schools can understand them. These are more than general moral values which people of different faith backgrounds or no faith might share. Rather they are distinctively Christian values, based on the Bible and centred on the example of Jesus Christ. Our church schools fully demonstrate and exemplify these values whereas **our non-church schools demonstrate the values shared by our society but will not be expected to adopt church specific policies.**

It is important that all those engaging with CDAT have a clear appreciation of its distinctively Christian vision.

CDAT will seek to be a successful family of schools providing distinctive and loving environments which ensure effective education for all children, through excellent teaching, innovation and the sharing of good practice as schools work together across the Trust. We will:

- build a thriving community of schools with common moral purpose rooted in Christian values and ambition for children, but encouraging each academy to develop in the best way to serve its community;
- provide a culture of healthy dialogue and listening between CDAT and its academies;
- provide mutual support and improvement to develop the practice of all our professional staff so that all can improve;
- empower effective school leaders and local governing bodies to take courageous decisions in the best interest of young people;
- provide systems and services that aim to reduce the administrative burden and support school leaders with the professional management of their academies;
- provide purposeful and supportive early intervention for academies that would benefit from accelerated school improvement.

CDAT will seek to provide the very best education for every child in its schools so that they succeed and are well prepared to move onto their next phase of education. Our strong Christian ethos will be the foundation of all we do and by guiding and informing the actions of children, staff and governors we will:

- ensure that all children achieve their full potential – making at least the expected level of progress and with many exceeding;
- value and respect children from all faiths and beliefs – and taking into account their beliefs when planning for their learning and the learning of others;
- provide a curriculum that is broad, rich and balanced; focused on developing knowledge and skills; and meeting the needs of each child;
- provide learning opportunities that are inclusive, engaging and challenging for every child;
- create a learning environment within which children are happy and motivated learner;
- support our leaders to be highly effective in leading school improvements;
- support our teachers and support staff to be outstanding practitioners – providing high quality teaching so that every child learns;
- listen to the children and taking their views into account;
- work with parents to enable them to contribute to their children's learning;
- work with other schools and the wider community to ensure that we maximise on the learning opportunities that they can provide for our children and staff.

Converting to an Academy Q&A Document

WHY ARE WE LOOKING AT BECOMING AN ACADEMY?

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.

2. Are all academies the same? No. There are many different types of academy. For example, some schools have become academies independently; others have joined together with other schools to form a Multi Academy Trust (MAT) whilst others have joined larger groups and organisations, often known as academy chains. Different academies have a variety of school improvement and governance arrangements.

3. Why are we considering converting to an academy now? Eastway Primary School is currently state funded via our Local Authority, Wirral Council, but operate within the Church school system. The Diocese of Chester has established a Multi Academy Trust (MAT) called the Chester Diocesan Academies Trust (CDAT) to provide an academy option for its schools.

The current educational climate is changing and many schools nationally are choosing to take advantage of academy status. The Government has recently announced that all schools are to become academies by 2020 and 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.

We have been in discussion with CDAT about joining their Trust and now is the right time to take this forward.

4. Are any other schools in our local area academies? Yes, there are a number of academies in our local area and region. However, all academies are different in the same way that every school is different.

WHAT DAY-TO-DAY CHANGES WILL HAPPEN?

5. Will a move to academy status mean a new name for the school? No. The school will continue to be called Eastway Primary School. Other schools that have chosen to become academies with CDAT have also chosen to retain their existing names.

6. Will a proposed new academy have a new uniform? No. Parents will not need to buy a new uniform.

7. Will a proposed new academy still be open to the community? Yes. There will be no change to the current provision and use of the school by different groups to hold events.

8. What will be the impact on our children with special needs? There will be no change to the level of support provided. Eastway Primary 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.

9. Will the school hours be any different as an academy? Although it is highly unlikely that the school day will be changed, it is the decision of the CDAT Board to decide this as they have the power to do so. This decision is usually delegated to the local governing body of an academy, 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.

10. Will pupils' education be disrupted by a transition to academy status? No. When an academy is approved to go ahead, it will do so with minimal disruption to the staff and students. Most of the changes will take place behind the scenes with support from a dedicated team from the Diocese, who have gone through this process before with other schools.

11. If we move to being an academy will this change what is taught? We would be expected to continue to offer the full range of National Curriculum subjects. OFSTED continue to inspect academies and their handbook for inspection is the same one as used in any other school. The academy would be expected to strive to be outstanding in OFSTED. In other words, there may be no change in what or how pupils are taught.

WHAT WILL THIS MEAN FOR OUR SCHOOL FINANCES?

13. How is an academy funded? In maintained schools all revenue funding (building funding is slightly different) goes directly to the Local Authority. The Local Authority (LA) takes a proportion of the money from the school budget to provide essential services to the school and the rest is delegated under the Local Management of Schools. Schools can, and do, buy additional services from the LA and other providers. As a result schools currently depend upon the local authority for many services such as school improvement, HR, finance, etc.

Academies will receive a similar level of per-pupil funding as maintained schools, plus funding to meet additional responsibilities that are no longer provided for them by the Local Authority (LA). With CDAT, the money that would have been provided to the LA to run the school is provided directly to CDAT. CDAT does retain some of the budget in order to provide services to the academy. Local authorities fund their core services in a similar way.

14. Does this improve on current funding arrangements?

Converting to an academy will not be to our detriment financially, although there may be the potential for some financial gain (see below). However, any decision 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. On a day-to-day basis, schools such as ours are charged less to belong to the Multi Academy Trust and 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?

15. What are the Terms and Conditions for staff? On conversion to academy status teachers and staff employed by the school 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.

16. Who will employ teachers and staff following conversion?

At present Eastway Primary School staff are employed by the Local Authority. Following conversion, all staff will be employed directly by CDAT.

17. Will CDAT 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?

18. Does CDAT have the capacity to support our educational standards? CDAT has established its own school improvement capacity for those schools choosing to become an academy which includes an Education Officer and team of consultants. The education officer is an ex-HMI with experience in school improvement with all types of schools, with a proven track record and capable of working at the highest levels. Consultants also have experience in supporting and challenging schools in a variety of ways, including as inspectors for Ofsted and as local authority and Diocesan consultants.

Collectively, the team is experienced and qualified to support and challenge schools in data analysis, teaching, behaviour, safeguarding, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, Christian distinctiveness, special educational needs and disabilities, and leadership and management. The school improvement package will include support and challenge for governance and the team are able to draw on further support from the Diocese and National Leaders in Governance as appropriate.

19. How will an academy raise achievement? The whole structure of CDAT's Multi Academy Trust has been designed to challenge and support schools in equal measure. We would receive a number of days of school improvement support from a school improvement professional, 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 state of the school.

CDAT will intervene rapidly in schools that are underperforming or on a downward trajectory based on OFSTED criteria.