



The Priory Parish C.E. Primary School

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Headteacher: Mr G. P. Edwards

'As a Christian Family, together, we will realise our God – given ability to change the world.'

4th May 2023

Dear Parents and Carers,

CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED ACADEMY CONVERSION

Following many months of research, the Governors at The Priory Parish CofE Primary School have taken a decision to consider applying for academy status and joining Chester Diocesan Academies Trust (CDAT). In considering applying for academy status, school leaders and governors have met with representatives from the Chester Diocesan Board of Education, from Chester Diocesan Academies Trust (CDAT) and have talked to other schools who are already part of CDAT and to other local schools. CDAT is the multi-academy trust that was originally established by The Diocesan Board of Education for schools in the Diocese who wish to take advantage of the academy model. We strongly believe this will bring enormous benefits for our pupils and our staff.

RATIONALE

The current educational climate is changing and many schools nationally are choosing to take advantage of academy status. 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. Changes to the way funding is distributed have also meant that local authorities now have less capacity to support schools, and so more and more schools are looking to academy trusts to provide their school improvement support.

As a consequence of the national picture and continued debate and growth of academies in England, the Governors have spent some time looking more closely into whether an academy model would be in the best interests of the children, teachers and staff at The Priory Parish CofE Primary School. The Governors are keen that The Priory Parish CofE Primary School 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, our Governors consider that joining Chester Diocesan Academies Trust (CDAT) now will be a positive step for the school.

THE PROPOSAL

The Governing Body at The Priory Parish CofE Primary School believes that the best plan for the school is to become an academy and join Chester Diocesan Academies Trust (CDAT).

As a Church school, we embrace any opportunity to strengthen our links with the Diocese of Chester, which we would do as an academy within the Trust. The Diocese already work closely with The Priory Parish CofE Primary School and have provided high-quality support in areas

such as governance, school ethos etc. Becoming an academy would give us increased access to this support from a trusted partner. As part of the CDAT family of schools, we would have access to the Trust's school improvement support and expertise. The Trust has a strong track record in working with schools to help them improve. CDAT have received significant interest from other schools across the Diocese who would like to join the Trust, including Wirral schools. Demand has been high especially from those schools that are judged to be Good or Outstanding. Strengthening our partnerships with these schools would have clear benefits for The Priory Parish CofE Primary School and the additional support available through a Trust model would be an advantage of becoming an academy.

The proposal is that The Priory Parish CofE Primary School converts to academy status and joins Chester Diocesan Academies Trust (CDAT) on **1st February 2024**.

QUESTIONS AND FEEDBACK

Governors are now entering into the consultation phase. We know that the debate around academies has been prominent in recent times, and we would like to make sure that the entire school community has had an opportunity to ask questions about what academy status means for The Priory Parish CofE Primary School. The consultation period will run from **4th May 2023 to 9th June 2023**.

We are therefore holding a meeting whereby we would welcome the opportunity to talk to you about academy status. The meeting will be held at the school as follows:

On Tuesday 16th May 2023

- Parent/Carer meeting 5.00pm - 6.00pm

We have included a feedback form (Appendix A) with this letter - we would be grateful if you could submit to us by **4.00pm on 9th June 2023** with any questions, comments, or concerns you may have by email at academyqa@thepriory.wirral.sch.uk. You can also leave any paper feedback forms in the box at the school office and forms received will be kept anonymous.

We also enclose, with this letter, an outline of the CDAT Vision (information also available at www.cdat.co.uk) and a copy of some Frequently Asked Questions which you may find of interest. Information about the consultation and the feedback form can be found at [The Priory CE Primary School \(prioryparishprimaryschool.com\)](http://ThePrioryCEPrimarySchool(prioryparishprimaryschool.com)) under the Academy Consultation section of the school website. Any future information, feedback or responses can also be found on this website. The consultation letter will be available on the school website (under the Academy Consultation section) on 4th May 2023.

In order for us to gather as broad and as deep a range of opinions as possible, we strongly urge you to participate by attending the organised information session. If you are unable to attend this session, but would like further information or would like to respond to our consultation, you can contact the school in the following ways:

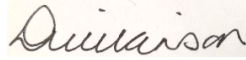
- Telephone: 01516477188
- Email: academyqa@thepriory.wirral.sch.uk
- Suggestions box: Leave paper feedback in the office at main entrance

Finally, we would like to thank you for your continued support of The Priory Parish CofE Primary School. We believe that we have a truly wonderful school here and we are committed to ensuring we provide the very best for our family.

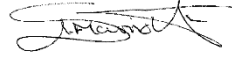
Yours sincerely,



Mr Greg Edwards
Headteacher



Mrs Deborah Wilkinson
Co- Chair of Governors



Ms Sheena Marriott
Co- Chair of Governors

Appendix A: The Priory Parish CofE Primary School Feedback Form

Q1. Please confirm the status that best describes you: (Please select one)

- A member of school staff
- A pupil at the school
- A parent or carer of a pupil
- A member of the community
- A school governor
- Other (Please specify)

.....

Q2. Do you support the proposal for The Priory Parish CofE Primary School to convert to academy status and join Chester Diocesan Academies Trust (CDAT)? (Please select one)

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Q3. Any other comments or questions? (Please write in)

Thank you for your comments!

Please return this form to the [school office \(Reception\)](#) or send by email to academyqa@thepriory.wirral.sch.uk by **4.00pm on 9th June 2023.**

CDAT's Vision

Rooted in Christian values, CDAT is committed to:

- Valuing the uniqueness of every child
- Aspiring to excellence
- Being a nurturing learning community for all

Jesus said, 'I have come in order that you might have life—life in all its fullness' (John 10:10).

As a Trust, our aim is to ensure that all of our pupils are able to benefit from and enjoy 'life in all its fullness.'

CDAT's Aims

CDAT will seek to be a successful family of schools working together to secure high-quality 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, encouraging each of our schools to develop in the best way to serve its community;
- provide a culture of healthy dialogue and listening between CDAT and its schools;
- provide high-quality professional support and opportunities to develop the practice of all our staff;
- empower effective school leaders and local governing bodies to take courageous decisions in the best interest of young people;
- provide systems and services to reduce the administrative burden on our schools, and support school leaders with the professional management of their schools;
- provide school improvement support that meets the individual needs and circumstances of each school.

CDAT's Ethos

CDAT doesn't take a corporate approach with its schools – we don't look to change school names/uniforms/badges, nor do we have a 'CDAT curriculum' that we expect all schools to follow or insist on all schools using the same 'schemes' for maths, phonics and the like. We recognise that our schools are very different –each serving its own community –and that a 'one size fits all' approach wouldn't work.

We see the trust's role as being to help each school be the very best version of itself that it can be.

While our schools all have their own unique identity, they are also all part of the CDAT family of schools. All of our schools have a very clear Christian ethos and share a real commitment to collaborative working. By working well together, and drawing on the expertise across the trust, we believe that we can help each of our schools to continue to develop and improve.

Converting to an Academy Frequently Asked Questions

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? The Priory Parish CofE Primary School is a Church of England aided primary school. This means that we are currently state funded via our Local Authority, Wirral but operate within the Church school system. The Church school system is managed and developed through individual Dioceses, and each Diocese has a Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) which is a statutory body. There are currently 115 church schools in the Chester Diocese, some of which are already academies. 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. 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 Governors feel that 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 region. However, all academies are different in the same way that every school is different.

CDAT currently has thirteen member schools: seven are in Cheshire (Little Bollington, Brereton, Bosley St Mary's, Wybunbury Delves, Astbury St Mary's, Utkinton St Paul's and St Oswald's CE Primary), four in the Stockport/Tameside area (St Matthew's Stockport, St Paul's Stalybridge, St George's Hyde and Bredbury St Mark's) and two on the Wirral (Christ Church Moreton and Dawpool CE Primary). All are CofE primary schools.

5. What are the advantages of Academy Status? In addition to the advantages mentioned above, as Governors and Headteacher of The Priory Parish CofE Primary School, we believe that the opportunity to work with new partners and schools, working together to ensure standards across the Trust are consistently high, is an exciting new proposition. However, we will continue to actively work with all local schools and current partners, ensuring the best of both worlds. Chester Diocesan Academies Trust has made it clear that academy status will not change the things that work so well for our school.

6. What are the 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 and their parents and carers, teachers and staff will not notice the difference when we become an academy. There will however be additional workloads for members of staff in the school office. Chester Diocesan Academies Trust recognise the additional pressures and will provide the school with a significant amount of support from specialists who will be able to pick up the majority of this additional work.

WHAT DAY-TO-DAY CHANGES WILL HAPPEN?

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

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

9. 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.

10. What will be the impact on our children with special needs? There will be no change to the level of support provided. The Priory Parish CofE 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.

11. 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.

12. 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 CDAT, who have gone through this process before with other schools.

13. 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 both the statutory OFSTED (section 5) and the Church School (section 48) inspections. In other words, there may be no change in what or how pupils are taught.

14. Would there be an increased emphasis on religion and Christianity in CDAT academy? We would maintain our status as a Church School and the existing emphasis on our Christian values and ethos would not change. Church schools are also subject to the statutory (section 48) Church School Inspection and this also would not change.

WHAT WILL THIS MEAN FOR OUR SCHOOL FINANCES?

15. How is an academy funded? In maintained schools, including church 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. This has led to a dual system where the LA has taken the lead on school effectiveness whilst the Diocese has focused on the distinctive and inclusive characteristics of the school.

Academies will receive the same 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.

16. 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. 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. 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?

17. What are the Terms and Conditions for staff? On conversion to academy status teachers and staff employed by the School's Governing Body (as an aided 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.

18. Who will employ teachers and staff following conversion? At present The Priory Parish CofE Primary School teachers and staff are employed by the school's governing body. Following conversion, teachers and staff will be employed directly by CDAT, but will still have The Priory Parish CofE Primary School as their place of work.

19. What happens with teachers/staff pension? Pensions continue as they are now. The Trust is a member of the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS) for teaching staff and the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) for support staff.

20. 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?

21. 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.

Collectively, the team is experienced and qualified to support and challenge schools in areas such as, teaching and learning, the curriculum, educational standards, 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.

22. How will an academy raise achievement? The whole structure of CDAT 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. In addition, all of our staff would benefit from a wide package of professional development opportunities provided by the Trust.