

# Multi Academy Status Consultation Document

The Governors of Bridport Primary School, Burton Bradstock School, St Mary's School and The Sir John Colfox Academy would like to begin a consultation process to seek views with regard to changing the status of these schools to a Multi Academy Trust.

The consultation process will enable the schools to be in a strong and informed position, allowing governors, staff, parents/carers and stakeholders to investigate Academy Status further and ensuring that the students' needs are at the forefront of any decisions we make.

## What are Academies?

### Academies are:

- Publically funded independent schools
- Not in the control of the Local Authority

### Academies have clear aims:

- To raise educational achievements
- To be inclusive
- To raise aspirations and standards and support other schools.

## A Multi Academy Trust

This is a group of academies who wish to join together. The schools involved are Bridport Primary School, Burton Bradstock School, St Mary's School and The Sir John Colfox Academy.

## Admissions

The Academies would be bound by the Code of Practice with regard to Admissions and the Governors have no plans to change the comprehensive nature of the schools by introducing any form of selection.

## Curriculum

Academies have greater freedom with regard to the curriculum. They must still, however, follow the National Curriculum for English, Maths and Science as well as conforming to statutory regulations with regard to subjects like Religious Education and Physical Education. However, with greater freedom over the curriculum the schools could work together to ensure a more coherent curriculum for students from age 4 to 19.

## **Funding**

The principle of Academy funding is that Academies should receive the same level of funding as they would receive from the LA as a maintained school. In addition, Academies receive funding to cover additional responsibilities they acquire as independent schools, for providing services that are no longer provided for them, by the LA. Academies have greater freedom over how they use their budgets. The LA continues to pay for home to school transport, special needs statements, co-ordination of admission arrangements and Educational Psychology. As a group of Academies we would be able to make efficiency savings by buying in bulk and for example negotiating more affordable insurance policies across all schools.

## **Staff**

Currently, staff are employed by the Governors. Existing staff would be transferred to the Academy from the previous school under TUPE regulations. This guarantees that existing pay and conditions at the point of conversion are preserved. Governors will agree pay and conditions and determine policies for the staffing structure, career development, discipline and appraisal of staff. Academies are not subject to the School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document or DCC Job Evaluation for support staff, but the Governors have no plans to move away from national agreements or pay levels. Academies must give access to the Teachers' Pension Scheme to teachers, and Local Government Pension Scheme to support staff.

Generally, Trade Unions remain against the Academy programme because they fear the freedoms given to academies could impact on school staff in the longer term. They also worry that if hundreds of schools become academies, there will be less opportunity for collective negotiations to secure the best working conditions and pay scales for school workers. Although academies do have the freedom to adopt their own conditions of pay and work for staff, the Governing Bodies of the schools are committed to maintaining national pay and conditions for all their staff.

## **Governance**

There would be a Board of Trustees for all the Multi Academy Trust. Each school would retain its own Local Governing Body. The Academy Trust (a charitable company limited by guarantee) would then enter into a funding agreement with the Secretary of State for the running of the academy. The Academy Trust would be accountable for the strategic direction of the Multi Academy Trust as a whole and its performance.

The key responsibilities are to:

- ensure the quality of educational provision
- challenge and monitor the performance of the Multi Academy Trust
- manage the Multi Academy Trust's finances
- employ staff

Multi Academy Trusts becomes the direct employers of staff, have direct health and safety responsibilities and are responsible for ensuring that the school undergoes an

external financial audit. As the Academy Trust is a charitable company, the Governors would also be directors and charitable Trustees, and would therefore need to comply with obligations under company and charity law.

### **Should we become a Multi Academy Trust?**

The Governors of all the schools are required to act in the best interests of the school in securing excellence in terms of outcomes for the children in its care and providing long-term sustainability.

### **Advantages of becoming an academy**

The Governors believe that there are key benefits to becoming a Multi Academy Trust:

### **The Vision for Bridport Schools**

The Partnership will create an outstanding, inspirational and inclusive learning community that meets the needs of all young people. This will be achieved through:

- Working together to design and deliver an inclusive, innovative and stimulating 4-19 curriculum
- Raising the aspirations of ALL within the partnership
- Developing and nurturing a collective approach to raising achievement through appropriate challenge and support and a commitment to early intervention
- Providing a learning and teaching environment and culture where all feel safe to take risks in order to learn and grow.

**(Taken from the Memorandum of Understanding)**

### **Education 4-19**

The young people of Bridport would benefit if schools are working together and supporting them from age 4 to 19.

- We could set our own priorities not imposed by outsiders (though Ofsted and the examination framework still need to be considered).
- We would work together to improve the teaching and learning across all the schools.
- Teachers could share their skills and expertise more.
- There would be more events, competitions and activities across all the schools.
- Movement between schools would be easier for parents and students.
- There would be more effective support for leadership, induction of staff, governor training.
- We would be learning from each other and working together as the education provider across Bridport.

## **Funding**

- The schools would be funded directly from Central Government so all money would come to us to decide how we wish to use it.
- Each school would retain it's budget but the extra money would be centrally held to support our priorities
- We would buy in the services we require – like payroll, personnel support, SEND support.
- As a larger group we would expect to achieve efficiency savings on things like insurance policies, bulk buying etc.

## **Control over our future**

- Schools are regularly at risk of being forced to convert into Academy chains if they do not meet the requirements of Ofsted. As a Multi Academy Trust it would be our job to support each other and to work together to prevent this.
- The LA has less and less capacity to support schools – we believe we can do it better ourselves.

## **Possible Disadvantages of becoming an Academy**

- For some schools, not having the local authority to mediate with central government could be a daunting prospect. There will be greater levels of financial responsibility to accompany greater financial autonomy.
- Some professional associations are against academies. They argue that national negotiations with employer organisations could be undermined and hard won pay and conditions eroded. Existing staff would bring over their existing pay and conditions through TUPE regulations.
- If the school needed any significant building repairs or extensions it would depend upon central government or the diocese so it wouldn't be based on local priorities.

## **The Consultation Process**

The consultation process, agreed by the Governing Body, has been designed to gather as wide a range of views as possible. It is important you have your say, as your views are important to us.

*How can I share my views?*

Governors are happy to receive comments in any form. Emails should be addressed to the school office your child attends.

office@bridport.dorset.sch.uk

office@burtonbradstock.dorset.sch.uk

office@stmarybridport.dorset.sch.uk

office@colfox.dorset.sch.uk

Letters should be marked "Private and Confidential – Academy Proposal" and handed in (or posted) to the school office, so they can be passed to Governors.

In addition, an Academy Consultation Meeting for parents will be held at the school on **15 June 2015 at 7.00pm**. This will provide an opportunity to:

- hear why the Governing Body believe Multi Academy Trust is best for all schools
- ask questions and/or raise concerns
- share your views on the proposal

During this period, governors also plan to hold meetings with staff and their union representatives. Students and the student council will be given the opportunity to share their views.

## **Conclusion**

The numbers of academies is growing quickly. This is an exciting time which could shape the direction of our school in the interests of our children. We look forward to hearing your views.