



St Mary Magdalene's RC Primary School

Headteacher: Mrs B Parkinson

'Love one Another'

Academy Conversion

As you may already be aware, Bishop John has asked all Catholic schools in the Diocese to consider forming Catholic Academy Trusts and becoming academies themselves. Therefore, the governing body of St Mary Magdalene's Roman Catholic Primary School has applied to become an academy as part of the Romero Catholic Academy Trust with other local Roman Catholic schools under the Academies Act 2010. The governing body is now consulting on whether the school's academy conversion should take place. Further information about what becoming an academy means, and how to comment on the proposals, is set out below.

Will St Mary Magdalene's Baptist Roman Catholic Primary School definitely become an academy?

The governing body has submitted an application to convert to academy status and is working towards a conversion in September 2021. However, the school is not obligated to become an academy until the contract between the academy trust and the Department for Education (known as the Funding Agreement) is signed.

The academy trust will not sign the Funding Agreement until parents and carers of pupils at the school, staff at the school, and pupils themselves have had the opportunity to comment on whether the school should become an academy. We have written to all parents and carers and have also invited them to a meeting at school on **22nd April 2021 at 6.00pm**, to learn more about the proposals to become an academy, or to comment on the proposals.

We have also held meetings with staff, and will be keeping pupils informed throughout the process.

Any comments or representations which are made about the proposals will be considered by the governing body before a decision is taken to sign the Funding Agreement. Details of how to provide comments and representations are set out below.

The academy trust will not sign the Funding Agreement unless they are content that conversion would be in the best interests of the school taking account of all of the legal and practical ramifications.

What is an academy?

An academy is essentially an independent school which is funded by the state. It is independent of the Local Authority and receives its funding direct from central government.

Previously academies have tended to replace schools which have poor results or otherwise needed to improve. Under the Academies Act 2010, all schools are able to become academies.

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What are the benefits of being an academy?

- **academies are independent of Local Authority control** - this means that academies have more freedom about how they conduct themselves
- **academies receive their funding direct from central government** - this means that academies control more of their funding because none is retained by the Local Authority for the provision of central services
- **academies have more freedom over the curriculum taught** - this means that academies do not need to teach parts of the National Curriculum which they do not consider is appropriate for their pupils
- **academies can set their own pay and conditions of service for their staff** - academies have the freedom to alter the pay and conditions of their staff (subject to normal employment law protections for staff) and so can provide staff with better pay and conditions than previously
- **academies have more freedom to undertake innovative projects** - academies are companies and so have more freedom to undertake innovative projects, such as setting up and utilising trading subsidiaries

Are there any disadvantages to becoming an academy?

As an academy we will be directly liable for matters such as insurance, employment liabilities, pensions, health and safety, and, property maintenance. However, as mentioned above, academies receive more funding from central government to help them meet these additional costs.

Will the admissions arrangements change?

As a voluntary aided school St Mary Magdalene's Roman Catholic Primary School already deals with its own admission arrangements. As an academy, it would still deal with its own admission arrangements and would also still be bound by the national admissions code, and Admissions Appeals Code. Accordingly, there will be no change in the way in which the admission arrangements are set if the school becomes an academy.

The current admission arrangements will remain in place for the time being. If the academy wanted to change its admission arrangements consultation would be required.

Will staff leave?

If the school converts to an academy, all staff currently employed by the Local Authority will automatically transfer to the new academy on their current pay and conditions. Although the academy will have more freedom to amend those pay and conditions in the future, the Governing Body does not intend to take such a step in the foreseeable future and in any event, any change to pay and conditions would need to be consulted upon with staff representatives.

Will St Mary Magdalene's Roman Catholic Primary School change?

We do not intend to change St Mary Magdalene's Roman Catholic Primary School except in ways which we think will improve the school even more. For students, it is unlikely that they will see much, if any, change in their day to day school lives. Academies do have the power to vary their curriculums and vary the length of the

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school day, however, we do not intend to take any such steps at this stage and would engage with parents/carers, staff and students if we did ever intend to make such changes in the future.

How can I find out more?

A meeting will be held at on **22nd April 2021 at 6.00pm**. We would encourage you to attend if you have any questions, or simply want to learn more.

There is also more information about academies on the DfE website:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/academies>

If you can't find the answer to your question here, or on the DfE website, and cannot attend the meeting on **Thursday 22nd April 2021**, please email the school at enquiries@st-marymagdalenesrc.lancs.sch.uk who will try to assist.

How can I make representations?

To respond to this consultation on whether the school's conversion to academy status should take place, representations can be made in writing to: Mrs Bridget Parkinson, (Headteacher) St Mary Magdalene's RC Primary, Wellfield Drive, BB120JD

Or by email to: bursar@st-marymagdalenesrc.lancs.sch.uk

The closing date for representations to be made is **3rd May 2021**.

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