



Executive Headteacher
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Dear Parents and Carers

In response to Government policy in a rapidly changing educational landscape, the Governing Body of Lees Primary School wish to inform you that they have unanimously voted for a change in its status from a Local Authority School to a 'Convertor Academy', as part of a wider collection of schools. Having considered the alternatives, it has been agreed that the school should form a new, Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) with our local neighbours, Oakworth and Haworth Primaries. This new Trust will be solely led by the three schools and each will retain their separate identities, Headteachers, Leadership Teams and Governing Bodies.

Both Oakworth and Haworth share the same values and ethos as Lees and have a proven track record of achievement and school improvement. By coming together into a MAT, the three schools can continue to build upon the successes that they have seen in recent years and realise their ambition; to educate the whole child and inspire pupils to develop a love of learning, for success in later life.

We also believe that the Trust will provide many exciting learning opportunities for pupils, as we share each school's strengths and expertise. Academy status will allow us to make informed decisions, aligned to the specific learning needs of pupils across the Worth Valley and to utilise the abundance of fantastic resources in our local area.

The school is applying to the Department for Education (DfE) for an Academy Order and we are now starting a consultation process with pupils, parents, staff and the wider community. Successful conversion will remain subject to a considerable amount of scrutiny (known as due diligence) on behalf of the DfE, who will ultimately approve the proposal. Should the conversion process progress without hindrance, we expect it to be completed for the start of the 2016-17 academic year.

More information about academies is provided below:

What are academies?

Academies are publicly funded schools, which are not controlled by the Local Authority and therefore have additional independence in a number of important areas. This greater independence brings increased responsibilities and opportunities to build upon our current success and ensure that we continue to improve our service to families in our local community. You can view further detail on academies at the Department for Education website at: <http://www.gov.co.uk>



What is a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT)?

A MAT builds on the principles above and is where two or more schools convert to academy status together. A single academy board (a company limited by guarantee) is formed to provide strategic leadership and an oversight of each school. Each school can retain its Local Governing Body, which would operate in much the same way as it does at present.

Why Convert to Academy status?

Firstly, becoming an academy would allow us to strengthen cohesion between all three schools, within our local community. Secondly, there would be greater flexibility in how we spend our funding. At present, the Local Authority retains a significant percentage of our budget to provide centralised services. As an academy, we would be able to determine for ourselves which, if any, of those services we want the Local Authority to provide and could choose to purchase services from other providers, if we prefer. Finally, academies are becoming a reality across the country and a number of our neighbouring schools have either recently converted or are in the process of converting. Many of the traditional services provided by the Local Authority are being withdrawn as a result of enduring funding pressures and this situation is only likely to worsen. All three schools wish to be proactive in running their own MAT, rather than following the business model of a larger academy chain. It is the Governing Body's considered view that the time is now right for the school to seize the initiative and take control of its' own destiny. It is the Government's plan, however that all schools in the country will convert to Academy Status by 2020.

What might change?

Accountability would be direct to the Department for Education rather than the Local Authority. There would also be some additional financial performance management reporting to satisfy the requirements of Companies House and the Charities Commission, but this burden is managed centrally and not by each individual school. In the years ahead, the education system faces a significant number of changes which may be of concern to some and these changes will affect us whether we become an academy or not. However, Oakworth, Lees and Haworth believe that we manage change well and that, in joining together as a MAT, we will be able to strengthen our ability to meet future challenges with a single, stronger voice.

What would stay the same?

Schools joining the Trust would retain their own, distinctive characters and identities; including their names, staffing teams, uniforms, logos and websites. Most importantly, our schools will keep their own ethos, aims and values.

In summary, we hope that you will agree that this is an extremely exciting opportunity for all three of the schools involved and we would welcome your engagement as we progress on this journey. We will contact you again once we are ready to start the formal consultation process with you and organise a meeting in school.

In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact the school at any time, if you have questions.

Yours faithfully,

Mrs G Holland
Executive Headteacher

Mrs S Cotton
Chair of Governors

