



Theydon Bois Primary School
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30th January 2018

Dear Staff

The governors of Theydon Bois Primary have been involved in a consultation to convert to academy status with a group of schools in our area for the past 18 months. We will be forming a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) with 14 other local primary schools. This decision has not been taken lightly. As you know, we have been working closely with the other schools that will be joining the MAT on a regular basis for over 15 years to ensure we do the best for our children's future education.

Joining a brand new MAT has the following advantages:

- We are part of the team that shape the MAT and the way it will operate;
- We will continue to strengthen and build on the already strong partnership and collaboration with local schools; and
- We are in a MAT with schools in close proximity and similar contexts and expectations.

Converting to an academy within a MAT would not bring significant changes to the day to day running of the school. All the schools joining the MAT feels very strongly about keeping their own autonomy and identity.

What are Academies?

Academies are state-funded independent schools, receiving their funding directly from the government, rather than the Local Authority. They are overseen by individual charitable bodies called academy trusts. Under the present government, the Academy programme has been expanded to embrace all schools, putting more flexibility and ownership in the hands of individual schools, giving greater freedom to innovate and tailor provision to local needs and priorities.

Whilst government timescales and approaches have altered, the direction of travel remains the same and Multi-Academy Trusts have emerged as the preferred academy model. The proposed National Funding Formula for schools will have a significant impact on the Local Authority and therefore the support options available to schools. Schools need to ensure that they future-proof themselves against the financial and structural changes ahead.

What are the implications?

The stories in the press about the increasing pressures on school budgets are no fiction and finances are being squeezed. We anticipate that support currently provided by the local authority at Essex County Council, will also lose a significant proportion of its funding, reducing the services currently available to schools, or increase the costs of buying them.

What next for Theydon Bois Primary School?

Doing nothing is no longer a sensible option and we have done a great deal of information gathering to determine the options available and the best pathway for the children of Theydon Bois Primary School. Other schools within the Epping Forest Consortium have also been scanning the education horizons and have made the decision to convert from a Single standalone Academy to become a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT), inviting other local schools to join them in forming a local learning partnership.

Theydon Bois Primary School has been heavily involved in the discussions that have helped shape the direction this MAT might take to maximise the opportunities for collaboration amongst local schools, which could benefit the local community and its young people.

To explore this option more, the governors have formally agreed to pursue the next steps to initiate conversion to academy status for Theydon Bois Primary School with a view to forming a local MAT.

What are the advantages of joining a local MAT?

The Epping Forest Consortium already supports lots of informal collaboration amongst its member schools. A local partnership in the form of a Multi-Academy Trust would further enhance the potential for all sorts of cost savings, economies of scale and enhanced purchasing power.

Educational and learning opportunities include improved curriculum links between the schools; opportunities for staff to work across key stages (e.g. KS1 – KS2) to enhance expectations and understanding, as well as staff development opportunities – all of which could help staff recruitment and retention, which is becoming a more significant issue due to the high cost of living locally.

What difference will it make?

We are hoping from the outside there will be very little obvious change. The uniform, the staff and the name of our school will all be exactly the same. Behind the scenes things will work a little differently. The school will have a different bank account, we might purchase supplies and stock from different companies but day to day you probably won't see any difference. The children might notice more opportunities to use facilities at other local schools but most of the changes will happen behind the scenes to enhance provision and transition.

What happens next?

Following a 12 month period of due diligence, the full governing body has voted to pursue the next steps to initiate conversion to academy status, with a view to forming the Epping Forest MAT with at least fifteen other schools in the Epping Forest area. We have registered this proposal with the DfE and Essex County Council for approval. Another important part of this phase is to launch a formal consultation with you, the parents, staff and other stakeholders. This is a crucial part of the process, which takes place in tandem with a host of other tasks that will be completed over the five weeks.

What do you think?

We are keen to hear your views and your questions. To explain the process more fully and give you the opportunity to ask questions **we would like to invite you to** an information meeting on **Wednesday, 7th February 2018 at 3.30 pm in Purlieu Classroom**. We will talk to you more fully about the options we have been exploring, the choices made and why, and the timeline for the conversion process.

Please don't worry if you can't be there in person. There will be some information on our school website by Friday, 9th February specifically relating to the academy conversion process and we will be posting and updating FAQs from both the information evening, and also any we receive by email. Your questions will help governors shape the next steps of the process and understand more fully what is important to you.

Please come and take this opportunity to share your views and find out more. It would be helpful if you could complete and return the reply slip below indicating whether or not you will be able to attend the meeting on 7th February and if you have any question(s) you would like to ask.

Ultimately, it's about the children and we feel that converting to an academy and forming a MAT with other local primary schools will offer long term benefits in terms of expected standards and pupil outcomes.

Yours sincerely

Ms P Bagshaw
Chair of Governors

Frequently Asked Questions

Will this mean another new uniform?

No, the uniform will remain unchanged if we join a local MAT.

Will the school name have to change?

No, we will still be called Theydon Bois Primary School. The name of the MAT has not yet been decided.

Who will be running the school?

Theydon Bois Primary School will still have its own leadership team and its own Head. There are no plans to change this while the budget can still sustain it. The full Governing Body will likely reduce in size to form a local governing body. They will all be accountable to a board of MAT trustees who will oversee all the schools in the MAT.

When will Theydon Bois primary School become an Academy?

If each stage is successful we are likely to convert during the Summer of 2018. Nothing is definite until the secretary of state for education and the school signs the agreement.

Is there a financial cost to the school?

We can apply for a £25,000 government grant to help with any costs linked to the conversion, such as legal fees. We don't anticipate any financial costs beyond that funded by the grant.

Will the school have more money if it becomes an Academy?

The school will still have its own budget allocation from the DfE, but instead of this coming via the Local Authority, it will come via the MAT. Currently the LA keeps a percentage of this allocation. As an academy the vast proportion of the budget will be devolved to the school but a small percentage goes to the Epping Forest MAT. Specific figures will be available once we are able to get funding details from the DfE about budget shares. To get more specific financial information we need to progress to the next stage in the process.

Will the schools in the MAT have the same holidays?

We don't envisage any changes in school holidays as we currently work closely together to ensure that we maximise the opportunity to work together during training days.

Theydon Bois Primary School – Academy Consultation Meeting

I/we will be attending the Consultation meeting on Wednesday, 7th February at 3.30 pm at the school.

Name(s):

Question(s):

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