

CONSULTATION DOCUMENT FOR BURRSVILLE INFANT SCHOOL

Academy Status at Burrsville Infant School

As a result of Burrsville Infant School being placed in an Ofsted category, requiring it to improve its educational standards, the Department for Education decided that it should be sponsored to become an Academy.

The Headteacher and staff have already delivered significant improvements in the school and this has been recognised in a recent Ofsted monitoring inspection. However, the Department for Education consider that sponsored academy status will ensure that those improvements will be built on and sustained most effectively.

The Department has selected REAch2 to sponsor Burrsville Infant School to become part of the Reach2EssexAcademy Trust. REAch2 is a primary school academy trust developed by Hillyfield Academy in collaboration with a number of other high performing primary schools and academies.

Sponsorship means that REAch2 will support the conversion of Burrsville Infant School and put in place an educational improvement programme to ensure that educational standards continue to improve quickly.

The Department wish to start consulting to ensure that the views of all stakeholders will inform how the academy is managed and organised to meet the needs of its pupils and the wider community. Therefore, they need to know what you think.

Academies are state funded schools independent of Local Authority control – in other words the funding comes from Central Government straight to the School and the pupils, without first going via the Local Authority. Academies are also all-ability, non-selective (assuming there is no selection presently), non-fee paying schools in the same way that Burrsville Infant School is now.

So that you can find out more about the academies programme, the reasons why the DfE is changing the status of the school and some of the common concerns about academies, REAch2 has developed this Consultation Document. We hope it will help you to understand the change of status and the role REAch2 will play at this important time in the school's development.

It has been organised under the topics that we think will be the most important factors in helping you to form your opinion. These are:

1. The Consultation Process - how you can have your say
2. The main reasons for the DfE's proposal
3. Considerations about becoming an academy
4. Information about the academies programme, including:
 - Finance
 - Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Equality Impact assessment
 - Admissions and Term Dates
 - Governance
 - Building and Emergency Contingency Plans.

If you need any help in translating or understanding this document, then please contact the office where we will make arrangements to help you.

1. The Consultation Process – how to have your say

The consultation process has been designed to gather as wide a range of views as possible. It is important you have your say, as your views will influence how the academy is managed and organised.

Who we will consult with?

We will seek the views of:

- Pupils
- Parents/carers
- Staff and their trade union representatives
- Local schools
- The Local Authority
- Local councillors
- Local community groups
- Any other interested parties

How can I share my views?

The school is happy to receive correspondence in any form. Emails should be addressed to admin@burrsville-inf.essex.sch.uk. Letters should be marked "Private and Confidential - Academy Proposal" and handed in to the school office, so they can be quickly forwarded on. All correspondence will be acknowledged (unless, of course, it is anonymous).

In addition, two Academy Consultation Meetings will be held at the school on Thursday 26th September – at 3.30 pm for Staff and at 6.00 pm for Parents/Carers

This will be an opportunity to:

- hear why the DfE took the decision
- ask questions and/or raise concerns
- share your views on the proposal.

During this time, governors also plan to hold meetings with staff and their union representatives.

Consultation documentation and links to useful websites will be posted on the school website once it is active. In the meantime please see: [xxxxxx](#)

How long will the consultation period last?

The consultation period begins on Monday 9th September and will last until Friday 11th October at 12 noon and Burrsville Infant School is likely to become an academy on 1st November 2013.

2. Main reasons for the proposal

The Governing Body's primary function is to ensure that Burrsville Infant School delivers the best possible education for its pupils and their families. The academy's programme may offer a number of significant benefits which could support the school's drive for continuous improvement. These include:

Freedoms

Becoming an academy will allow our school leaders greater freedom to innovate. For example, free from the requirement to follow the National Curriculum, the school would be empowered to develop a dynamic curriculum designed to meet the need of its own pupils.

Greater flexibility to purchase services

As an academy, the school will receive resources previously retained by the LA to run its services – about 10% of its overall budget. Although the school would still need to purchase a number of services, governors have the freedom to “shop around” to achieve best value.

A different relationship with the Local Authority

The Academies programme as an opportunity to enter into a new and potentially exciting relationship with the LA. Although independent, the school would seek to work in partnership with the LA.

3. Considerations about becoming an academy

Some people still have concerns around academy status. These include:

Potential changes to staff conditions

Generally, unions remain against the 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 work for staff, the Governing Body is committed to maintaining national pay and conditions for all its school workers.

Two-tier school system

Another concern that some people have is that academies will create a potentially divisive two-tier schools service. It is thought that if hundreds of schools become academies, they will be seen as more attractive schools than non-academy schools and, therefore, become more popular with parents and possibly receive better funding from Government. An argument in favour of all schools remaining within their local authorities is that the LA can ensure schools are equally well supported and fairly funded.

Increased risks

It is acknowledged that there are risks associated with becoming an academy:

- Change of this nature will occupy the governors and leadership team of Burrsville Infants for some time. If we are not careful, there is a danger of everyone “taking their eye off the ball” as the school converts. However, the school has a good track record of managing change and governors are confident that the conversion process would be effectively managed by school leaders. Governors will also carry out a full impact assessment so that they can quickly respond to any potential difficulties resulting from academy conversion.

- Some staff may feel unsettled by this process of change and seek jobs elsewhere. However, governors believe this risk would be offset by the increased professional development opportunities for staff.

4. Information about the Academies Programme

Finance

What happens now?

Central Government, through the DfE provides Local Authorities (LA) with a sum of money each year known as the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The LA uses this grant to:

- fund nursery provision in their area
- fund individual school budgets
- provide a range of services for schools such as free school meals entitlement, education welfare services and special educational needs services.

The LA is responsible for setting its own formula for determining each school's fair share of the total money delegated to schools – it does this with the involvement of Schools Forum (a body that includes school stakeholders).

After the LA has taken some of the money (or top-sliced), the remainder is given to the school to be spent on things such as staff salaries, computer equipment, books, heating, building maintenance and cleaning.

The DfE also provides a range of grants to LAs, some of which are for the LA to spend on services that support education and some of which are to be passed on to schools for them to decide how best to spend it. The two most important grants for schools are known as the Schools Standards Grants and the Schools Development Grants. The LA funds the additional support required for children with Statements of Special Educational Need. Although Burrsville Infant School has full use of its premises, the LA owns all of the schools buildings.

The money paid to the school is accounted for in a set of accounts prepared by office staff. A special committee of the Governing Body, called the Finance and Premises Committee, is accountable for how the money is spent and for making sure that the accounts are accurate. The school's accounts can be inspected by the LA at any time.

What happens when Burrsville Infant School becomes an academy?

Academies are funded by the DfE through the Education Funding Agency (EFA). When Burrsville Infant School becomes an Academy, the EFA would provide it with a General Allocation Grant (GAG) made up of two components:

- core funding which is exactly the same as the school would have received from the LA using its funding formula
- Local Authority Central Spend Equivalent Grant Educational Services Grant (ESG) which would be Burrsville Infant School share of the money, based on pupil numbers, which the LA currently top-slices and spends centrally on those services that the academy would now be responsible for.

The Educational Services Grant (ESG) is the additional money that Burrsville Infant School will receive in comparison to an LA maintained school. On receipt of this money, Burrsville Infant School will need to decide how and where to buy the services that it needs and which are currently supplied by the LA, it may also choose to purchase from the LA. The school

may be able to get those services less expensively than the LA currently charges, or it may have to pay more for them. Because the school would be buying services directly, the quality of the services it receives could improve.

The academy would receive School Standards Grants and School Development Grant in the same way as a maintained school. The LA also continues to fund support for children with Statements of Special Educational Needs (SEN).

The LA would no longer have the right to inspect the school's accounts at any time. Instead, the school would need to have its accounts audited by a firm of accountants at least yearly. When Burrsville Infant School becomes an academy, the Governing Body would undertake to ensure that the terms and conditions for all existing staff remain at least as good as those for staff in equivalent posts in schools which are still bound by national and local agreements. Also, the school buildings and equipment would be owned by a special type of charity called a trust or would be part of a leasing arrangement from the LA. This is described in the Governance section of this document.

Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Equality Impact Assessment

What happens now?

The LA has responsibility for assessing pupils and maintaining their Statements of SEN. The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) of the school has a responsibility to identify pupils that might need additional help and then work with a range of school staff and outside agencies to develop an individual education programme that will help.

The LA has responsibility for pupils with Statements. They have to:

- ensure that pupils are appropriately assessed and statemented where necessary
- fund any individually assigned SEN resources
- monitor arrangements for SEN pupils in academies
- conduct reviews of the Statements of children in academies at least annually.

The school has to comply with the Admissions Code and any SEN obligations set by the LA. It also has an obligation to consider the impact of potential discrimination on groups by the decisions it makes.

What will happen when Burrsville Infant School becomes an academy?

The school would still have to comply with the Admissions Code and any SEN obligations. The LA would retain responsibility for pupils with Statements in an academy on the same basis as for statemented pupils in maintained schools. They would still have to:

- ensure that academy pupils are appropriately assessed and statemented where necessary
- consider parents' representations for an academy to be named on a Statement and act reasonably in considering those representations
- fund any individually assigned SEN resources
- monitor arrangements for SEN pupils in academies
- conduct reviews of the Statements of children in academies at least annually
- monitor SEN provision and educational psychology services in the school
- fund pupil referral units
- fund education out of schools
- fund education for excluded pupils.

When converted into an academy, Burrsville Infant School would receive the appropriate statement funding for individual children and a share of funding for other provision in relation to SEN including: behaviour support services; licences and subscriptions (for instance for software); therapies and other health related, education and welfare services.

There are obligations on schools which convert to academies equivalent to those placed on maintained schools. In practical terms, this would require new academies to:

- inform parents that their child has SEN and the special educational provision being made
- an unqualified obligation to admit a child to the school if the school is named in the Statement
- appoint a qualified teacher as SEN coordinator (SENCO) and ensure that any new SENCO would undertake prescribed training.

As academies are classed as state-funded independent schools, the LA should consider representations to attend the school from parents/carers of SEN children, just as it would for any other independent school. The Academy continues to have an obligation to consider the impact of potential discrimination on groups by the decisions it makes.

Academies are required by their funding agreements to consent to being named in a child's Statement unless they can demonstrate that admitting the child would be incompatible with the efficient education of other children and that there are no reasonable steps they could take, together with the LA, to prevent the incompatibility.

When Burrsville Infant School becomes an academy, the Governing Body would retain the ethos of inclusion through which there is a commitment to providing the best possible education for the young people of all abilities and backgrounds from our community. Whilst the Governing Body is not aware that becoming an academy would discriminate against or disadvantage any group of children or staff, it will nevertheless be carrying out an equality impact assessment and would like to hear your views.

Things to think about

Do I believe that when Burrsville Infant School converts to an academy, it would continue to provide SEN services for the community?

Do I think that becoming an academy would discriminate against or disadvantage any group of children or staff?

Admissions and Term Dates

What happens now?

Admissions criteria and catchment areas are set by the LA. The Local Authority criteria for allocating school places where there are more applicants than places available in a school are:

1. Children in Public Care;
2. Pupils with a Statement of Educational Need;
3. In exceptional circumstances, there is discretion to admit children on the grounds of their and/their family's acute medical or social need for that particular school;
4. Children whose brother or sister is on the school's roll on the closing date for applications;
5. Children living nearest to the school.

Term dates are set centrally by the LA. Schools have little or no discretion in changing those dates.

What would happen when Burrsville Infant School becomes an academy?

When Burrsville Infant School becomes an academy it would continue to be bound by the national admissions code, would continue to be part of the LA co-ordinated admissions and envisages no changes to criteria.

The academy would have the power to set its own term dates if it chose to do so; however, it is highly unlikely that governors would choose to set term dates which did not match local schools. Should the Governing Body wish to deviate from LA term dates in the future, it would undertake a full consultation process prior to any change.

Governance

Governance is about how the school operates and ensures a good quality of education for all its pupils, including those with special needs.

What happens now?

School governors bring a range of experience and interests from many walks of life. They work closely with others to make good decisions about school aims and policies. Governors work as a team of volunteers who are responsible for making sure the school provides a good quality of education. They do this together with the Headteacher, who is responsible for the day-to-day management of the school.

Every school has a Governing Body. It should include:

- parents elected by other parents in the school
- staff governors elected by the teaching and non-teaching staff
- Local Authority governors
- Community governors appointed by other members of the Governing Body
- the Headteacher.

The number of governors may vary depending on the school's type or size. Governor appointments are for up to four years.

What would happen when Burrsville Infant School becomes an academy?

The Governing Body would be responsible for establishing an Academy Trust. 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 and its Governors would have a strategic role in running the academy.

The key responsibilities are to:

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

It would be for the members of the Governing Body of the school to decide and agree, in discussion with the Secretary of State, who among them would wish to be members of the Academy Trust and which of them would wish to be governors of the Academy Trust. It is possible to be both a member and a governor.

Academy governing bodies become the direct employers of staff, have direct health and safety responsibilities, are the school's admission authority 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.

The make-up of the Governing Body of an academy is determined by its Articles of Association. The DfE model Articles of Association have set a minimum of three member governors, but not a maximum, appointed by the Academy Trust. The basic governance model envisioned by the DfE includes: one LA governor, a minimum of two elected parent governors and optional staff governors appointed by the Academy Trust. There may also be up to three co-opted governors appointed by the Governing Body.

Burrsville Infant School is proposing that the existing governors will become the Academy governing body, which will comprise of 9 Governors in total including 2 staff governors, 2 parent governors, the Headteacher and 4 other governors which will include at least one member of REAch2.

Things to think about

Would academy governance arrangements be more or less effective than the current arrangements?

Building and Emergency Contingency Plans

What effects would becoming an academy have on the building?

The Academy Trust would enter into a lease agreement with the freeholder, the LA; this agreement is usually for 125 years.

What happens if something happens to the building when we become an Academy?

There would be a General Annual Grant that would be paid by the Government to the Academy Trust. This would cover the normal running costs of the academy including: repairs; servicing and maintenance of buildings (including redecoration, heating, plumbing, lighting etc); maintenance of grounds (including boundary fences and walls); cleaning materials and contract cleaning; water and sewage; fuel and light (including fuel oil, solid and other fuel, electricity and gas); rents and rates; purchase, maintenance, repairs and replacement of furniture and fittings; and insurance.

If the academy building suffers damage which means that it cannot be used as a school, the LA would be required to provide facilities for the children to continue their education. This is the same requirement that the LA currently has because its duty is to provide for the children and not the Academy Trust.

Would there be a specific insurance grant to cover for emergencies?

Academies are required to cover insurance at specified minimum levels of cover. They are also eligible to seek an Earmarked Annual Grant from the EFA (Education Funding Agency) for emergencies, in the same way that an LA can pay a maintained school a contingency payment.

By becoming an Academy, would Burrsville Infant Schools building be more or less likely to be upgraded?

In the same way that LAs have a capital building programme, so there will be an academies building programme. If Burrsville Infant School need for capital investment was prioritised and met agreed criteria, it could be earmarked for investment. However, becoming an academy would not guarantee capital investment.

The Sponsor of Burrsville Infant School's Conversion – an Introduction REAch2 Principles

REAch2 (Raising Educational Achievement for Children) is an Academy Umbrella Trust developed by Hillyfield Academy in partnership with other outstanding primary schools and academies. REAch2 is a growing collaboration of primary academies that are supporting each other to provide children with the highest quality of education. To make sure that our schools are in the best position to consistently serve their communities we are developing a balanced membership of high performing academies; and academies that are on their journey to becoming high performing.

Every school within the REAch2 Trust signs up to a set of non-negotiable principles, however REAch2 has a fundamental belief that each school needs to retain or develop its own identity. All schools, including those under-performing, have elements of good and outstanding practice and these will be fostered and encouraged.

REACH2 makes a commitment to each pupil that they will be successful in:

- Effective numeracy and literacy;
- The ICT skills required by a technologically advancing world;
- Appreciation of, and ability to express themselves through music, visual and performing arts;
- Social skills - the development of friendships, trust and a sense of community.

And will:

- Believe in their own value, and have a desire to fulfil their individual potential;
- Have respect for others, a sense of community and understanding of everyone's role within the school and outside;
- Have a love of learning and a belief in the value of lifelong learning.

REACH2 will foster these skills and attitudes through:

- High expectations of all children and staff;
- High standards of teaching and resources, both in the core curriculum and in music, technology, art and design;
- Discipline based on self-respect and awareness of others;
- The recognition and celebration of achievement;
- A friendly, supportive, purposeful school community which values and looks after its members;
- Strong links with the world beyond school and a sense of how individuals and communities can contribute to a better society.

The Department for Education has selected REAch2 to sponsor Burrsville Community Infant School's conversion. This means that REAch2 will provide additional intensive support over the next year, for the Governors and Headteacher, in their vision to build on the recent improvements in the school and develop it into an outstanding centre of learning.