



# GFSchools

## Believe Learn Flourish

With  
Faith Hope Love



Pam Acheson  
Executive Headteacher

14<sup>th</sup> March 2022

Dear Parents/Carers

### **Consultation to convert to Academy status and join the Leeds Diocesan Learning Trust (LDLT)**

The Federation of Grewelthorpe and Fountains C of E Primary Schools are Church of England schools within the Diocese of Leeds. Our schools already have a strong working relationship with the diocese working closely with the Diocesan Board of Education (DBE), the DBE being one of two statutory bodies that the school works with, the other being the Local Authority. When Church Schools decide to convert to become an academy they have to join a Church Multi-Academy Trust and proceed in accordance with any policy and guidelines set by the DBE.

Leeds DBE published its revised Academy Policy in September 2021. The policy encouraged all Church Schools not yet academies to consider their academy future and review which of the 11 Church MATs in the diocese would be right for them. The DBE policy reflects the Government's agenda and expectation (reinforced in Government and DfE communications in 2021 and we expect will be a main thrust in the soon to be published Education White Paper) that all schools will, in time, become part of a strong family of schools in a MAT.

Our Governing Body has been carefully reviewing its options to become an academy and it has decided to consult with parents, carers, staff and other stakeholders, on whether each school should become an academy and join LDLT.

We are therefore commencing formal consultation today, Monday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2022, for a period of four school term weeks. Consultation will therefore end at 3pm on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> April 2022.

### **What is an Academy?**

Academies are state schools, funded directly from central government, no longer under the control of the Local Authority. Academy status gives schools more freedom to be innovative and creative with the curriculum, timetabling, staffing and governance. The school will still be a Church of England School under the authority of the Diocese of Leeds and its religious designation will not change.

All academies continue to be inspected by Ofsted and comply with the same rules as other schools on special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), exclusions and admissions. Church Schools will continue to be inspected under the Statutory Inspection for Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) framework.

There are now thousands of academies in the country, including many schools that have converted in the Diocese of Leeds and in the local authority.

An academy is part of a charitable trust (the MAT) run by a board of trustees. Trusts and their academies are rightly expected to work with and support other schools, including vulnerable schools. Should you wish to know more about the Government's policy, the Department for Education has its own academies bookmark on <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/convert-to-an-academy-information-for-schools>

### **What is a Multi Academy Trust (MAT)?**

A Multi Academy Trust is a charitable company and is responsible for overseeing the running of several schools. It has three layers of governance: the Members; the Directors; and the Local Academy Councils (similar to school governing bodies).

A MAT is formed when its articles (legal document) are approved by the DfE and it is registered at Companies House as a company. The Church of England has specific articles approved by the central church and the DfE for the creation of Church MATs. A Church School can only convert into a MAT that uses these articles. MATs are made up of a number of academy schools – some are just primary school MATs, others will have secondary schools in them and some will include Special Schools too. It is usual for MATs to have periods of growth, when several schools might join and then some period of consolidation. There isn't a set number of schools that makes a MAT. In the Church MATs in the diocese it is most usual for converting schools to keep their own name; if the school wants to change its name it can do. The partnership established between all schools in the MAT ensures that the schools can share skills and best practice and make optimum use of resources ensuring best value for money for each school.

In many ways the children will not notice any immediate difference, they will be in the same uniform, in the same classrooms with the same teaching staff. However, in time the children will perhaps notice changes and improvements in the way that they learn for example and have greater links with each school within the Trust.

### **About the Leeds Diocesan Learning Trust**

The Leeds Diocesan Learning Trust is a new Diocesan MAT established by the DBE in close partnership with the DfE, who are providing funding for the project. The DBE, as part of its review of policy, determined that an 11<sup>th</sup> Church MAT would be beneficial to support all schools being able to convert. It intends to work with a number of clusters of schools to establish the MAT and has been working with schools in the Ripon area as the first cohort of schools to join LDLT. The Governors at the Federation believes this is the right time to pursue academisation and to be one of the first schools into the new MAT. We are encouraged by the vision for the MAT and the strong emphasis already placed on collaborative working. We feel the MAT vision, ethos and values will align well with our own school vision and values. If schools must, in time, convert and become academies we feel this is the right option and right time for us.

### **What will be the main benefits for schools within Leeds Diocesan Learning Trust?**

- Access to top quality staff, including a Trust leadership team who will sharply focussed on securing excellence.
- Moderation of standards across the partnership of schools to ensure the highest quality provision
- Greater control over finances and the money due to schools.
- Educational benefits for students as a result of additional freedoms available to academies in terms of the curriculum we offer, and how we prioritise resources.
- The opportunity to work in close and formalised partnership with other schools and share expertise and services that will benefit all our students and staff.
- Sharing resources and expertise, allows us to target funding towards improving front line teaching and learning.
- Develop our own solutions collaboratively.

### **What additional responsibilities will Academy status bring?**

- Currently the Local Authority employs our staff – going forward the Multi Academy Trust would be the employer rather than the LA.
- The Academy Trust would be responsible for admissions rather than the LA (although the Local Authority would still co-ordinate and ensure the Trust adopts clear and fair admission arrangements in line with the admissions law and the School Admissions Code).
- The Academy Trust would enter into a 125-year lease for the land, usually owned by the Local Authority. We already have responsibility for the cost of maintaining the land and buildings.

### **Will any changes to the school be made as a result of conversion?**

Please be assured that the character, ethos and values of the Federation of Grewelthorpe and Fountains C of E Primary Schools would remain unchanged should the proposals be agreed.

We do not intend to make any changes to the day-to-day work of the school following conversion, other than to adjust the governance arrangements and accountability that comes with working within a Multi Academy Trust and to bring closer working practices between the schools in the Trust. More information on the process and the answers to many of the questions you may have can be found in the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document included with this letter.

### **How do I learn more, and how do I respond to the consultation?**

At this stage we are not committing the school to conversion to academy status or to joining LDLT. We are consulting with everyone associated with our school before governors meet again to make a final decision.

The Governing Body would very much like to hear your opinion. As well as proving the FAQs we will be holding a consultation meeting at Fountains School on *Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> March at 6:45pm* to receive any comments and or questions you may have regarding the process.

If you wish to respond in writing to the consultation, we ask that you let us have your views by emailing the attached feedback template to [cofg@gfschools.co.uk](mailto:cofg@gfschools.co.uk) by **3pm on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> April 2022**. Please include your name and contact details.

Whilst we do not anticipate responding to each and every communication, we will provide answers to questions via the FAQs and we welcome your views. Please be assured your views will be taken into consideration by our Governing Body when they meet to make a final decision.

On *Monday 21st March* and *Monday 28th March* the FAQs document will be updated and shared on our website to reflect any questions that are pertinent to our wider community.

Following the closure of the formal consultation period the Governing Body will meet to consider how to proceed and the outcome of the consultation process will be shared with you as soon as practicable following the meeting.

Yours sincerely,

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Executive Headteacher

Rachel Bain  
Chair of Governors