

Do everything in love



1 Corinthians 16:14

St Mary's Church of England Primary School

STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION REPORT

31st October 2022

Summary

This report has been prepared for the Governors of St Mary's Church of England Primary School and describes the consultation process that has taken place to inform a decision on the proposed conversion of the school into an academy as part of Chester Diocesan Academies Trust (CDAT).

The Headteacher and Governors of St Mary's Church of England Primary School have led the process, with support from CDAT. Representatives from the school have made clear the implications of conversion through the production of a consultation Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document with attached questionnaire, and at consultation meetings that took place on 4th October 2022 and an informal drop-in visit at the school from Neil Dixon, CEO at CDAT on 15th September 2022.

Analysis of the information collected to date shows that stakeholders are broadly comfortable with the proposal for St Mary's Church of England Primary School to convert to academy status as part of CDAT. A number of questions and comments were collected at the consultation event which show that the school's main stakeholders, have engaged in the process, researched information in addition to that provided by the school and articulated their views clearly to the Trust and school.

Governors have had a considerable time to consider academy status and through their role have an understanding of the school, its systems and support that is not available to all members of the community.

The academy consultation started on 16th September 2022 and concluded on 20th October 2022. Governors will now confirm whether they wish to move ahead with the academy conversion process.

1. Introduction

Representatives of Chester Diocesan Academies Trust (CDAT) met with the Governing Body of St Mary's Church of England Primary School to discuss CDAT, a multi-academy trust formed by the Diocese of Chester, which is an option for schools within the Diocese who are considering the Academy model.

As a consequence of this, and the continued debate and growth of academies in England, the Governing Body decided to look more closely into adopting the academy model and whether at this time it would be in the best interests of the children, teachers, and staff at St Mary's Church of England Primary School.

The stakeholder engagement and consultation activities were designed to inform and seek comment and opinion on the proposed academy conversion from a range of interested parties most closely associated with the school. The key activities have included preparing and disseminating consultation materials, as well as holding meetings at the school. Underpinning the process has been a commitment to communicate with key stakeholders clearly and frequently as to timelines, process, and outcomes.

The remainder of this report details the full range of engagement activities that have taken place and an analysis of the responses received and conclusions drawn from this analysis.

2. Aims of the Consultation

The consultation exercise had a number of strategic aims:

- To inform stakeholders of the scope of the proposal and provide information on both short and long-term implications and opportunities.
- To ensure that a wide range of stakeholders were able to contribute their views and ideas and ask questions.
- To collate and analyse the views put forward to inform consideration by the Governing Body.

1. Consultation materials

a) PowerPoint presentations:

A series of PowerPoint presentations were developed for each audience to give all stakeholders consistent and relevant information as a starting point to inform the discussions.

Staff had a focus on staffing/HR issues and implications as well as what it could mean for pupils and more information on Academy status.

Key areas covered in the presentation were:

- The rationale for conversion and the local proposal.
- What are the key requirements to convert and the benefits and opportunities of converting to an Academy?
- Curriculum opportunities.

- Staffing implications.
- Financial considerations.
- Legal implications for land, buildings, and staff.
- What happens next.
- Questions & Answers.

A copy of the presentation can be found in Appendix 8.

b) Parents/ Carers Letter:

To support the parental consultation, a letter for all parents/carers was developed and sent out. The aim of the letter was to allow parents the opportunity of giving their thoughts about the school converting to Academy status and to raise any concerns they had.

Parents/carers were given the opportunity of sending in feedback either by, email or in writing.

c) Stakeholder FAQ's:

A frequently asked questions document (see Appendix 5) was prepared for the parents/carers consultation events. The aim was to give as much information as possible about all the practical things parents could want to know, ranging from whether there would be new uniforms to what it could mean for the pupils' learning experience. This document gave parents an understanding of what an academy is and what it could mean for the school.

d) Feedback Form

A feedback form was used as a vehicle to gauge reaction to the proposal for the school to become an academy and to join CDAT. Stakeholders had the opportunity to respond anonymously. There was a space provided for any questions and comments. Feedback forms could be submitted by email or could be left at the school office.

3. Overview of the Engagement Process

The following table outlines the full range of engagement activities that have taken place.

Date	Activity undertaken	Stakeholders engaged	Response / Number in Attendance
07.09.2022	Draft consultation materials shared with Headteacher and feedback invited.	Headteacher	-
07.09.2022	Consultation materials shared with Governors and feedback invited	Governors	-
15.09.2022	Neil Dixon (CEO at CDAT) made informal visit to the school	Staff	-
16.09.2022	Feedback forms inviting stakeholders to anonymously leave questions or comments about the academy proposal.	All Stakeholders	1 response received
16.09.2022	1 copy of consultation letter & FAQ sent to parents/carers of all pupils via email	All parents and carers of current pupils in the school	-
16.09.2022	1 copy of consultation letter & FAQ delivered to all staff	All staff in the school (teaching and support)	-
16.09.2022	Feedback forms inviting stakeholders to anonymously leave questions or comments about the academy proposal.	Members of the community including: Halton Borough Council Diocese of Chester S4Yc (nursery and sports provider)	-
Date	Activity undertaken	Stakeholders engaged	Response / Number in Attendance
04.10.2022	Meeting with staff @ 3.45pm	Staff	24 members of staff
04.10.2022	Meeting with parents/carers @ 5.00pm	Parents/Carers	0 parents/carers

4. Feedback

An analysis of the feedback received from feedback forms and responses provided at the consultation meeting is provided as follows:

NB: Full Questions and responses of meetings are available in Appendix 7.

- There was an invite sent out for a parents/ carers meeting on the 4th October 2022. No parents or carers attended the open meeting.
- There has been one respondent (parent/carers) who completed the feedback form via email. The respondent supports the proposal for St Mary's Church of England Primary School to convert to academy status and join Chester Diocesan Academies Trust (CDAT).
- During the consultation meeting with staff, questions were raised about support available with the condition of the school buildings and if current funding for sports and ICT development would still be available.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

The consultation with key stakeholders has been comprehensive. There was a good attendance at the staff meeting. Although there was only respondent completing the feedback form, informally, there has been a genuine interest for more information about what plans to convert to academy status would mean for the school and its pupils.

The engagement meeting held on 4th October 2022 facilitated open discussion about a wide range of implications of academy status. Questions received by the school and Academy Trust showed a high level of engagement and understanding by stakeholders. No significant concerns were recorded at the meeting or through the feedback forms made available. Any concerns raised were addressed fully by the school and Trust.

A higher response rate from all stakeholders would have been advantageous for the Governing Body in terms of decision-making. However, it could be deduced from the low response rate that stakeholders are comfortable with the proposal and do not have significant concerns that they wish to raise.

In conclusion, it is recommended that the school and CDAT build upon the support of parents/carers, staff and pupils shown throughout the consultation period by involving these groups of stakeholders in the development of the school as an academy.

CDAT and school governors will continue to engage with staff and trade union representatives throughout the academy conversion process.

6. Next Steps

There is a full Governor meeting scheduled on the 7th November 2022. This meeting will provide an opportunity for Governors to discuss the views put forward during the consultation to aid them in the decision-making process and decide what their next steps should be in this process.

Appendices (see separate files):

1. Parents/Carers Letter
2. Staff Letter
3. Community Letter
4. CDAT Vision and Ethos
5. Stakeholder/ Staff academy Frequently Asked Questions
6. Feedback Form
7. Engagement Questions & Answers
8. Staff Presentation