



Learning together for life, with Jesus

Uttoxeter Road, Checkley, Stoke-on-Trent. ST10 4NB

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Headteacher: Mrs Paula Snee

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Dear Parents and Staff,

As you may already be aware, the governing body of Hutchinson Memorial CE First School has applied to become an academy under the Academies Act 2010.

We are thrilled that our proposal to form a local Multi Academy Trust with schools currently in the Uttoxeter Pyramid of schools has been provisionally accepted by the DfE. As a result the governing body is now able to consult on whether the school's conversion to academy status should take place.

Further information about what becoming an academy means, and how to comment on the proposals, is set out below.

Frequently asked questions:

Will Hutchinson Memorial CE First School definitely become an academy?

The governing body has submitted an application to convert to academy status and is working towards a conversion on 1st February 2017. However, the school is not obligated to become an academy until the contract between the academy trust and the Department for Education (known as the Funding Agreement) is signed. The governing body has not even begun to negotiate the Funding Agreement with the DfE yet.

The academy trust will not sign the Funding Agreement until parents and carers of pupils at the school, staff at the school, and pupils themselves have had the opportunity to comment on the proposals. Parents and Carers are invited to

attend a meeting on 28th November at 7.00pm at Thomas Alleyne's High School, to learn more about the proposals to become an academy, or to comment on the proposals.

We have also held meetings with staff, and will be keeping pupils informed throughout the process. Any comments or representations which are made about the proposals will be considered by the governing body before a decision is taken to sign the Funding Agreement. Details of how to provide comments and representations are set out below.

The governing body will not sign the Funding Agreement unless they are content that conversion would be in the best interests of the school taking account of all of the legal and practical ramifications.

What is an academy?

An academy is essentially an independent school which is funded by the state. It is independent of the local authority and receives its funding direct from central government.

Previously academies have tended to replace schools which have poor results or otherwise needed to improve. Under the Academies Act 2010, all schools are able to become academies. As Hutchinson Memorial First School is an 'outstanding school' we have been able to apply to form a Multi Academy Trust with schools within the Uttoxeter partnership. In this first phase these schools are: All Saints Church Leigh First; Hutchinson Memorial CE First; Picknalls First; Windsor Park Middle and Thomas Alleyne's High School. Discussions are underway with remaining schools within the partnership who are looking to join the MAT in the coming months.

What are the benefits of being an academy?

- academies are independent of local authority control - this means that academies have more freedom about how they conduct themselves
- academies receive their funding direct from central government - this means that academies receive more funding because none is retained by the local authority for the provision of central services
- academies have more freedom over the curriculum taught - this means that academies do not need to teach parts of the National Curriculum which they do not consider is appropriate for their pupils

- academies can set their own pay and conditions of service for their staff - academies have the freedom to alter the pay and conditions of their staff (subject to normal employment law protections for staff) and so can provide staff with better pay and conditions than previously
- academies have more freedom to undertake innovative projects - academies are companies and so have more freedom to undertake innovative projects, such as setting up and utilising trading subsidiaries

Are there any disadvantages to becoming an academy?

As an academy we will be directly liable for matters such as insurance, employment liabilities, pensions, health and safety, and, property maintenance. However, as mentioned above, academies receive more funding from central government to help them meet these additional costs.

Will the admissions arrangements change?

As a community school's admissions arrangements are set by the local authority, the local authority also decides which pupils should be offered places at the school. As an academy, we will be in a position to put in place our own admission arrangements, and decide which pupils should be offered places in accordance with those arrangements. The academy will still be bound by the national admissions code, and Admissions Appeals Code.

The current admission arrangements will remain in place for the time being. If the academy wanted to change its admission arrangements consultation would be required.

Will staff leave?

If the school converts to an academy, all staff currently employed by the local authority will automatically transfer to the new academy on their current pay and conditions. Although the academy will have more freedom to amend those pay and conditions in the future, the Governing Body does not intend to take such a step in the foreseeable future and in any event, any change to pay and conditions would need to be consulted upon with staff representatives.

Will Hutchinson Memorial CE First School change?

We want to continue to be an outstanding school. We therefore do not intend to change Hutchinson Memorial First School except in ways which we think will improve the school even more. For pupils, it is unlikely that they will see much, if

any, change in their day to day school lives. Academies do have the power to vary their curriculums and vary the length of the school day, however, we do not intend to take any such steps at this stage and would engage with parents/carers, staff and pupils if we did ever intend to make such changes in the future.

How can I find out more?

A meeting will be held at Thomas Alleyne's High School on 28th November at 7.00pm. We would encourage you to attend if you have any questions, or simply want to learn more.

There is also more information about academies on the DfE website:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/academies>

If you can't find the answer to your question here, or on the DfE website, and cannot attend the meeting on 28th November at 7.00pm, please email office@hutchinson.staffs.sch.uk and we will try to assist.

How can I make representations?

To respond to this consultation on whether the conversion of the school to academy status should take place:

Representations can be made in writing to: Hutchinson Memorial CE First School, Uttoxeter Road, Checkley, Stoke on Trent, ST10 4NB or by email to: headteacher@hutchinson.staffs.sch.uk

The closing date for representations to be made is January 7th 2017.

Victoria Bennett

Chair of Governing Body



