



St Barnabas

CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Headteacher: Miss K Boardman, BSc Hons

26 February 2021

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Dear parents and carers

Important information about the future direction of our school

At St Barnabas Primary School, we are always looking at how we can develop our school so that we provide the very best education and learning opportunities for all our children. Our aim is to maintain all the great things that we do, make improvements where necessary and continue to strive for excellence. Over recent months, the school's governing board has been researching all options to help us achieve this aim. During this process, governors have seen the advantages that come from becoming an academy and joining an established Multi Academy Trust (MAT).

A MAT is a partnership of schools working collaboratively to share expertise and support each other in order to provide the very best education to all children. Schools in a MAT retain their own leadership and day to day decision making as well as having greater freedom to choose how they apply their funding and resources and how they design their curriculum.

The governing board agreed that Pathfinder Multi Academy Trust would have the most positive impact on St Barnabas enabling us to improve the quality of teaching and learning and ensuring our school values and identity are celebrated and encouraged. St Barnabas has been working with colleagues from Pathfinder schools throughout this school year to develop best practice in teaching and learning. We look forward to collaborating on future projects together.

It is the view of the governing board that this is the best choice for St Barnabas and in order to help inform our final decision, we would like to consult with all parents, carers, staff and wider stakeholders. We will take all responses into account alongside the wide range of information we will continue to gather and assess.

There will be two presentation dates for parents, taking place via Zoom, to find out more about Pathfinder Multi Academy Trust. These will be taking place on:

- Thursday 18 March at 6.00pm
- Monday 22 March at 3.30pm

If you would like to attend either of these presentations, please email school on stbarnabas@york.gov.uk indicating which date you would like to attend. We will send out the details for joining the online presentation nearer the time.

If you cannot attend one of the above dates, please email any comments or questions you would like answering to: stbarnabas@york.gov.uk. For further information, please see the Frequently Asked Questions at the end of this letter. You can also find out more about Pathfinder Multi Academy Trust on the MAT's website: <https://pathfinder.academy/>.

The consultation period is 30 days from the date of this letter. All feedback and responses received during this time will be considered by the governing board. Any decision as to whether or not to become part of Pathfinder Multi Academy Trust will be taken by the full governing board based on what is best for our children, our families, our staff and our wider community.

Thank you for your continuing support,



Miss K Boardman
Headteacher

Mrs Anne Williamson
Chair of Governors

Academisation - Frequently Asked Questions

What is an academy?

An academy is a state school which is funded directly by the Department for Education rather than being directly controlled by the Local Authority. Academies have greater independence and freedom to enhance the curriculum, and expand resources for the benefit of their pupils.

What is a multi academy trust (MAT)?

In recent years the government has changed the way funding is given to schools, which also means that local authorities are no longer able to provide the support and services for schools that they used to. In a multi academy trust (MAT), schools work together as a group. In Pathfinder, all schools have their own local governing committees and retain their individual characteristics, ethos and values. Joining a MAT means that we can benefit from the services and expertise provided by the MAT's Operations Team allowing the school to concentrate on the teaching and welfare of pupils. Some of the benefits of joining Pathfinder include the following:

- Pathfinder has a strong track record of improved pupil progress and outcomes as a result of the close collaboration and support which exists between schools.
- Shared buying power and economies of scale allow schools in the trust to save money on purchasing and contracts.
- Teaching and support staff benefit from the professional development and training provided through Pathfinder's career pathways programme.
- All schools have access to the services provided by Pathfinder's Operations Team which include Finance, HR, Estates and Facilities and Communications.

Are all MATs the same?

No, they vary in size and the types of schools (e.g. church school, community school, primary or secondary). Each MAT has its own vision and values and will offer different services to its school depending on their size and setup. MATs have a legal structure which includes having a board of trustees who are responsible for the overall direction and performance of the MAT and its schools.

Can we just stay as we are and not become an academy?

More than half of the schools in York have now become academies or have started the process of becoming an academy. As more schools leave the local authority it is becoming more difficult for them to support schools effectively. Staying as we are is not a realistic option for the future. Joining a MAT at this time allows us to make an informed decision on which MAT is right for our school.

Who is Pathfinder MAT?

Pathfinder Multi Academy Trust was founded in August 2016 initially between four schools. Today the Trust is made up of ten schools (one secondary and nine primary schools) serving more than 4,000 children and their families across York.

Pathfinder is an inclusive partnership of church and community schools underpinned by a shared vision, common values and a commitment to providing an outstanding education to all the young people they serve. Evidence shows that successful MATs meet the following criteria:

- Focussed on a geographical area with the right balance of schools
- Have a clear educational vision and a strong skill set
- Offer increased support and challenge for school improvement
- Promote consistency and innovation
- Articulate and live out shared values and ethos

Governors are confident that Pathfinder MAT meets all of the above criteria and that St Barnabas would continue to flourish as part of Pathfinder MAT, working with like-minded schools, whilst retaining our unique ethos and values.

Which schools are in Pathfinder MAT?

- Archbishop Holgate's School
- Acomb Primary School
- Badger Hill Primary School
- Clifton with Rawcliffe Primary School
- Hempland Primary School
- Heworth CE Primary School
- New Earswick Primary School
- Rufforth Primary School
- St Lawrence's CE Primary School
- Tang Hall Primary School

Are there other primary academy schools in York?

Yes. As well as the nine primary schools in Pathfinder listed above, many other primary schools in York have already become academies as part of other MATs (including Ebor Academy Trust, Hope Learning Trust, South Bank MAT and South York MAT). These include Burton Green, Carr Junior, Forest of Galtres, Haxby Road, Hob Moor, Knavesmire, Lakeside, Osbaldwick, Park Grove, Poppleton Ousebank, Robert Wilkinson, Scarcroft, Tockwith and Woodthorpe.

Will our funding change?

St Barnabas will have more control over its funding and decision-making. An academy receives its money directly from the government. This means the school has greater freedom to spend its money in a way which better meets the needs of its pupils by paying only for services which are used by the school. By becoming part of a MAT we will be able to pool our resources with other schools and choose the best way to use our funds for our children and community. Although it is not the main reason behind the proposal, as we face times of austerity, any opportunity for additional funding cannot be ignored - our school will receive:

- An initial grant to set up the MAT
- Additional per-pupil funding of approximately 2%
- The power of joint purchasing to reduce costs of services
- The opportunity to bid for grants from a central government pot, only open to academies

What will the changes be for my child?

It is very unlikely that you or your child will notice any difference in their day-to-day schooling and there will be no changes to the ethos and values of our school. However, we envisage that we will be able to offer more opportunities within school and through extra-curricular opportunities due to our new collaborations with other schools.

Will teaching standards change?

Joining a MAT will enhance the continued training and development of our staff, enabling us to achieve even higher standards, and widen curricular opportunities. St Barnabas will still be inspected by Ofsted.

Are there any rules about pupil admissions for academies?

Yes. Academies have to follow the law for school admissions, special educational needs and exclusions as if they were a maintained school. Academies cannot select pupils on the basis of ability. There will be no changes to the availability of free school meals for children.

Will the school name or uniform change?

No. There is no obligation for a school to change its name or uniform on joining a multi academy trust and there are no plans to do so.

Who deals with complaints when schools have become academies?

Parents or carers who have a complaint concerning their child's school would contact the headteacher directly, as they would normally do, in accordance with the school's complaints policy. If a parent is not happy with the response, they would then contact the MAT. If the parent is not happy with the MAT's response, they would contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

Would staff pay and conditions change?

School staff will transfer to the academy trust on their existing terms and conditions of employment. Both teaching and support staff will enjoy the same pension rights as they do now and continuity of service in local government will be recognised for employees.

Has a decision already been made?

No. As governors, we are exploring the pros and cons of converting to an academy as part of a MAT. Governors will not make a decision until parents, carers, staff and others with an interest in our school have been consulted. Governors will meet at the end of term to assess the feedback and make an appropriate decision.

If a decision is made to academise, how long would it take for the school to become an academy?

If governors make a decision to academise and join a MAT, it could take between 3 months and 18 months for the school to formally become an academy within a MAT.

How do I have my say?

There will be period of consultation where all parents, carers, staff and wider stakeholders will be able to give their opinions, ask any questions and raise any concerns. In the meantime, to find out more about academies, you can visit the webpage on academies on the Department for Education website at www.education.gov.uk.