

## *St Martins School*

### **Consultation on the question of whether or not St Martins should convert to academy status within The Priory School Trust.**

#### **Key information**

- **How long is the consultation open for?**

The consultation will close at noon on Tuesday 19 July 2016.

- **How do I make my views known?**

There are a number of options available to you which are set out at the end of this document.

- **How do I find out more?**

Please come along to our consultation evening on 20 June at 6.30pm **or** our parent coffee morning on Friday 8 July at 9.30am.

#### **Current position**

The governing body of St Martins is considering converting to an academy within The Priory School Trust. The governing body has received an academy order from the DfE, which is an 'in principle' decision of the DfE. An academy order is not a final decision of either the governing body or the DfE.

Before making a decision as to whether or not to proceed, the governing body is keen to hear all of your views on the question. This document provides further information on the pros and cons of conversion to help you respond to the consultation.

#### **How will the consultation impact on the governing body's decision?**

The governing body will not take a final decision on the question until the consultation process has been completed. You have the option of providing your comments in writing (in whatever format you would prefer) or by coming to one of our consultation sessions. You also have the option of coming into speak with me on any Tuesday from 2.30pm-3.30pm, if you would like to discuss the proposal further. The governors will then consider any comments/ representations received before making a final decision.

#### **What is the proposal ?**

The governors are exploring whether to convert the school to academy status within The Priory School Trust. If the governors decide to proceed, this would be effective from 1 September 2016 or as soon as possible after that.

#### **What is The Priory School Trust?**

The Priory School Trust was established in 2012 as a multi academy trust which, until now, has operated only one school, The Priory School.

#### **What are the benefits of becoming an academy?**

The governors are exploring this option as they consider that:

- academy status would ensure that the school has more freedom to choose how it spends its money in the best interests of the pupils;

- working together as a group of schools within The Priory School Trust allows us to collaborate with other schools to create efficiencies in how we buy supplies and in the opportunities that we make available to our students and staff;
- The experience and expertise of The Priory School Trust would ensure that we can continue to sustain and improve the performance of our school.
- the freedom to deviate from the National Curriculum to ensure that the curriculum delivered best meets the needs of our pupils and their futures;
- the freedom to vary terms and conditions would help the school to attract the best staff and to respond more innovatively to the cuts in funding;

### **What are the negative aspects of becoming an academy?**

There are some additional finance requirements of being an academy on account of it being a charitable company. One of the benefits of being within a group arrangement such as The Priory School Trust is that this burden would be shared and we would have the experience of their personnel.

There are some further items for which academies are responsible (which is why the funding for academies is slightly higher than it is for maintained schools) but again we feel that working within a group structure would mean that the overall efficiencies would put us in a stronger position financially.

### **What about the status quo?**

It is true to say that the performance of the school has been sustained through the hard work of our staff and with the support of our parents. However, the governors are concerned about:

- The continuing ability of the local authority to support the school into the future; and
- The ability of the school to respond to the continued drop in funding (in real terms) as a stand-alone school.

It is also possible that our school could be targeted for a pushed move to academy status given the current government agenda. The governors have explored the various options available and consider that The Priory School Trust is the best option available to the school.

### **How could this affect our pupils?**

It is possible that the school would look to move away from the National Curriculum, if it felt appropriate and in the best interests of the pupils to do so. The school would still be obliged to offer a broad and balanced curriculum and submit its pupils for national exams.

Working with other schools may enable us to offer the opportunity to expand our curriculum and / or our extended schools programme.

We believe that working within a group structure with other schools will enable us to pool our resources and ensure the best delivery of education to our pupils as is possible.

### **What does this mean for staff?**

Were the school to convert, the staff would transfer to The Priory School Trust under the 'TUPE Regulations'. These Regulations ensure that staff transfer on their existing terms and conditions. Pensions for staff would also remain unaffected.

Within a group structure such as The Priory School Trust there might also be the opportunity for staff to work in another school within the group, should they wish to. We would also propose to combine our CPD programme with the other schools, thereby increasing staff development opportunities.

### **How would the school be funded?**

As an academy, the school would be funded centrally by the Education Funding Agency (EFA), but the level of funding would be as determined by returns provided by the local authority. The school would receive the same level of revenue funding which it receives now plus an additional sum available to academies.

In terms of capital funding, the school would also be able to bid for additional funds through the EFA's Condition Improvement Fund. If there were five or more schools operated within The Priory School Trust (provided that there are more than 3,000 pupils) then it would automatically receive a capital funding allocation to spend across the group to address its priority maintenance and expansion needs.

### **Would the school still have a governing body?**

Yes - The Priory School Trust has a board of trustees which would oversee the school as well as the other schools for which it was responsible. In addition, there would continue to be a local governing body which would have elected parent and staff representatives, as well as individuals drawn from the local community.

### **How would the admissions arrangements work?**

There is no proposal that the admissions arrangements for the school would change were the school to convert. As an academy, we would be responsible for our admissions and we would make the decisions in accordance with our published admission arrangements. We would however continue to be part of the local authority's co-ordinated admission arrangements.

We would continue to bound by and comply with:

- the School Admission Code and the School Admissions Appeal Codes and
- the local authority's Fair Access Protocol

### **How would the school change?**

On a day to day basis, the pupils and teaching staff would probably see little change. For our finance team, new systems would need to be put in place but we would ensure that all staff are fully supported to meet this change.

Over the longer term, we consider that the move to collaborate within The Priory School Trust group of schools could put the school in a stronger position which would ultimately benefit everyone.

### **Would the uniforms change?**

No there is no proposal for the uniform to change.

### **Would the school have the same name?**

Yes

### **Is the school being forced down the academy route?**

Not at the moment but the governors are alive to this being a potential possibility in the future.

### **What about the governing body's obligations under the Equality Act?**

The governors are mindful of their duty to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The relevant protected characteristics are:-

- (a) age;
- (b) disability;
- (c) gender re-assignment;
- (d) pregnancy and maternity;
- (e) race;
- (f) religion or belief;
- (g) sex; and
- (h) sexual orientation.

The governing body will be carrying out its own assessment of any such impact on the protected characteristics of a decision to move forward with academy status, but if there is anything related to this which you would like to draw to the governors' attention, please get in touch.

#### **How do I respond to this consultation?**

There are a number of options open to you:

- to send any comments by email to [clare.ellis@stmartins3-16.org](mailto:clare.ellis@stmartins3-16.org) with the heading "Academy consultation"
- deliver any hand written comments to the school reception marked "Academy consultation"
- attend our consultation evening on 20 June, 6.30pm
- attend the coffee meeting with our governors on Friday 8 July at 9.30am
- arrange a meeting with the headteacher on any Tuesday between 2.30pm – 3.30pm

Please respond by noon on Tuesday 19 July in order that the governors will have the opportunity to take your response into account when making its decision.