



Thursday 19th October 2017

Dear Parents/carers

As a school, we endeavour to provide the very best education and opportunities for our children in everything we do, whether it is through our teaching and delivery in the classroom or indeed our varied and thorough extra-curricular provision that we offer to all children.

However, the school and Governing body has recognised that the role of the Local Authority is rapidly diminishing and the support for maintained schools is slowly disappearing. No doubt, you as parents, are aware of the national agenda in terms of the government's wish to ensure that all schools eventually become academies and therefore this is one of many reasons why Shobnall Primary can no longer rely on the support of Staffordshire Local Authority as we currently stand.

The face of education is changing rapidly and the Governing Body believes that the best way in ensuring that our school continues to provide excellent education opportunities is to consider the possibility of converting to become an academy and joining an existing and well established M.A.T. (Multi-Academy Trust). To this end, the Governors have investigated and researched the local John Taylor MAT (JTMAT), with whom we already work closely in partnership with. We believe that this will offer our school community the very best of opportunities moving forward as we believe it essential to work in collaboration with such a strong and well respected M.A.T. Shobnall Primary School would still retain its own name and much of its independence and we would all benefit from being part of the Trust. There would be no changes to our school badge and no changes to our uniform.

The conversion to an Academy would actually have little or no impact initially on either our children or you, as parents with the greatest change being experienced within the leadership and office staff at Shobnall School. I say 'initially', as over time, the children will benefit from greater collaboration with schools within the trust but also benefit from staff training and networking amongst all schools. The schools currently within the JTMAT include Rykneld Primary, Yoxall St. Peter's, Thomas Russell Infants, John Taylor Free School (the new one) and of course John Taylor High School.

As a parent, the crucial point regarding conversion would be that all pupils attending Shobnall Primary would be **prioritised** a place at either John Taylor Free School or John Taylor Academy. I know that this has been a concern of many of our parents for as many years as I can remember and therefore, with the old catchment areas slowly disappearing, this will come as welcome news to many.

With regards to the timescale of conversion, the process is likely to occur during this academic year but certainly not calendar year. I have attached some frequently asked questions regarding conversion to an Academy and I hope that you find everything is covered here.

Yours sincerely and on behalf of the Governing Body

Mr. R. Cruise

Headteacher



International
School Award

"Happy children, inspired learners"

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Frequently Asked Questions regarding Academy Conversion

Why change?

In recent years, we have all heard about the government drive for wanting all schools to become academies within the next 5 years. Although the government did back track on this initial announcement, Staffordshire County Council has suggested that all schools will be required to convert within the next two years and therefore they will have no capacity to support maintained schools. As a school, we wish to be in control of our own destiny and have a say as to when we convert and who we liaise with regarding this conversion.

What is an Academy?

An Academy is a state school that is run by an Academy Trust. The Academy Trust enters into an agreement with the Secretary of State for Education that sets out its responsibilities and accountabilities for the effective running of the Academy. The Trust is charitable, which means it must operate much like a charity and not for the profit of individuals or businesses.

What is a Multi Academy Trust?

A Multi-Academy trust (MAT) is when 2 or more Academies come together in a partnership. Our Governing body believes that the best option is to join the John Taylor MAT where we firmly believe that as a school, we will benefit and flourish when working with other schools within the MAT whilst our staff and pupils develop and share outstanding practice in teaching and learning whilst ensuring that our current high standards are maintained by the challenge of performance.

Who will be responsible for running Shobnall Primary School?

The JTMAT has a board of directors which includes individuals from all the local Governing Bodies of its member schools. This Trust board will delegate powers to our school's Governing Body and these will have a similar role to that of our current Governing Body. These powers will be the same as those agreed at other MAT schools. The existing Governing Body of Shobnall School is highly likely to remain as it is currently.

How will being an Academy effect the staff?

Once the school converts to become an Academy, all current staff are legally protected to transfer under the same employment terms and conditions, including pensions. Their continuity of service is protected and all staff will be consulted in accordance with the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations.

How will being an Academy effect the children?

Our children are very unlikely to notice any considerable change over the first few years of conversion. The building, classrooms, uniforms and teachers will remain the same although the children may experience a few more visitors into their classrooms as teachers and staff from other JTMAT schools may choose to visit to see our current outstanding practice and learn from our staff. The curriculum and learning will continue to evolve over time as we aim to maintain the highest standards of teaching and learning standards for all of our children.

How does the funding for the school change if Shobnall converts to an Academy?

Academies receive the same amount of per-pupil funding as they would receive from the Local Authority as a maintained school. We will also receive funding in the form of the Education Services Grant to cover the costs of conversion. All our funding will eventually come from the

JTMAT then we will have control over our budget. As a school, we will receive our money on a monthly basis, a little like a current account, rather than each financial year, like we currently do. Academies are in a far stronger position to control that part of the budget which is currently being automatically "top sliced" by the Local Authority so will benefit financially.

What are the risks of becoming an Academy?

The conversion from a maintained school to an academy essentially means that we will be taking the school out of the Local Authority and the support that they currently offer. This support includes HR support, SEND and behavioural support amongst others. However, as previously mentioned, this support is disappearing incredibly quickly and colleagues who used to be employed by the Local Authority have since left and set up their own support networks at a far more competitive cost. However, the JTMAT schools will be able to access these support networks collaboratively with all schools covering the cost and therefore resulting in the Academies benefitting from economies of scale.

Joining the JTMAT would not impact on our relationship with other schools outside of the MAT. We would remain in the Dove Valley Sports Association and East Staffs Sports for example whilst also liaising with local schools outside of the MAT for a variety of different reasons.