

BURFORD PRIMARY SCHOOL

CONSULTATION ON ACADEMY STATUS – QUESTIONS FROM PARENTS

TUESDAY 3RD FEBRUARY 2015

Parent (a)

Will parents have a say in whether or not BPS becomes an Academy – or is this consultation for information purposes only?

The FGB makes the decision on whether or not BPS becomes an academy. This consultation seeks the views of parents and other stakeholders to inform that decision.

Governors have resolved to seek academy status within ODST – and have applied to DfE for an academy order to allow that to happen. But Governors will review the outcome of consultation when deciding how to proceed.

Why are you considering joining with ODST instead of Burford Secondary? The Secondary School has a proven track record as an Academy and is very supportive of BPS. We are a NON DENOMINATIONAL SCHOOL!

ODST ensures that the ethos of primary education is secured (secondary and primary education is very different).

If BPS does become an Academy, how involved will parents be in decision making?

The decision is made by the FGB. After conversion the school will continue to have a local governing body which will include elected parent governors.

Parent (b)

What are the benefits for the school and its pupils?

Its policies are appropriate and relevant to primary education. Within the ODST there are no secondary schools, so the MAT focuses purely on primary schools and the ethos of primary education and particularly that of small schools. It is important to recognise that whilst all schools will have core aims, Burford Primary School serves its own community of children and their families, with different needs and it is this that makes the school unique - the individual ethos and character of the school would be retained.

Burford Partnership – there are 9 primary schools working effectively within this partnership and this will continue to operate under the ODST. Decisions made by the partnership for the local children will not be affected by conversion to join ODST. Furthermore, Burford School would have the option of becoming an associate member and benefit from some of the services.

ODST central services include the Curriculum, School Improvement, Human Resources, Finance, Governor Support, Buildings and Appeals. This is currently provided by the Local Authority but will be 'out sourced' from April 2015.

Schools retain their independence, whilst having the support of a larger body (MAT).

Increased and flexible staffing resources – expertise of primary colleagues could be shared.

3 of our partnership schools have opted to join the ODST and other schools within Oxfordshire have joined.

School would retain its governing body and head teacher.

Budget would still be delegated.

ODST has an established academy conversion process via an external consultant in consultation with the headteacher and governing body.

Which other local schools are members of the ODST?

St Peter's Church of England Infant School, Alvescot, St Christopher's Church of England Primary School, Langford and The Blake Church of England Primary School in Witney will all convert to academy status within ODST on 1 March. Bampton Church of England Primary School and North Leigh Church of England Primary School have been granted academy orders to join ODST with conversion expected before the next school year.

Parent (c)

How was the decision made to join ODST, on what basis and what were the deciding factors that put off other options?

Decision is made by the FGB after considering various academy model options, including a model with Burford Top School. As a consequence the governing body formally elected to convert to an academy in October 2014. When looking at other options it was absolutely paramount that our school should remain as a community primary school delivering a high standard of primary education and serving our community. We want to secure the primary ethos and school in its entirety for future generations and governors are confident this will be achieved with the ODST MAT.

What are the educational changes that you foresee coming nationally?

Joining ODST will not make any difference to the national agenda but ODST have the capacity to support us through any changes – including changes to the ways in which children are assessed, or to changing levels of funding for schools. Membership of a MAT will support us in securing improved economies of scale in purchasing so that we can sustain levels of funding for teaching and learning.

Parents (d)

Why, as a non-religious school, are we considering going with a religious trust?

The trust is open to all schools irrespective of their status and is suitable for church and community schools, working in partnership.

Does this mean the school will be taking part in SIAMS and is the school becoming a Church school?

No. Schools convert to academy status on what the DfE describes as an "as is" basis – so the community character of the school is protected.

What are the benefits of ALL options?

These have already been researched and discussed by the FGB looking at pros and cons of all models, of which there are many.

Parent (e)

I would like to understand why the first option could not be to join up with Burford School? This is very successfully run by an excellent Business Manager plus the majority of children will be going to this school at age 11 and it would be beneficial for all to forge strong links.

This was an option which governors considered, but was not in the best interests of this school and its future. Joining ODST will make no difference to our relationship with Burford School in particular as we support children in their transition from here to there.

My question/query against ODST is its Church of England based and as we are not a C of E School, I wonder how we will 'fit' in?

The trust is open to all schools irrespective of their status.

Parent (f)

How will this affect admissions policy for siblings?

Won't be affected – the admissions policy will remain the same.

Will there continue to be a Nursery intake for 3 year olds?

Yes.

Would there be a new uniform – and if so, any support towards the cost of replacing current uniform?

No.

Parent (g)

Why do you feel that it is necessary to convert this school into an Academy?

In July 2012 Oxfordshire County Council endorsed a formal position encouraging schools to consider partnership and joint venture with other school and academy status. They placed the onus on the Governing Body and leadership team within the school to consider how they might become an academy as part of a larger group of schools.

How will becoming an Academy assist in raising standards?

There is a strong team of professional support that is provided as part of the services package.

If additional Special Needs provision is required, will central government augment the current arrangements in proportion to demand?

Arrangements for supporting children with special educational needs assume that support will be provided by the child's school from within existing resources. This is the same for both maintained schools and academies. The local authority provides additional support for children assessed as having higher level needs, regardless of whether the child attends a maintained school or an academy.

Are the Teachers on board?

Yes.

Who would be accountable if standards nosedived?

The Directors of ODST will be accountable to the Secretary of State for outcomes and performance at the school. But responsibility for securing continuous improvement is delegated to a local Governing Body, as is currently the case. ODST provides support to all its schools to improve and will provide additional support should standards begin to slip.

How would you raise any funds to bridge any financial gap such as an unforeseen increase to the school's buildings insurance?

Funding arrangements are little changed. Academies receive a little extra funding in lieu of services provided at no cost to maintained schools by the local authority (although there are now very few such services). The school is currently insured by the LA, at a reduced cost. The Government has now introduced a risk protection arrangement which provides cost effective cover for all academies.

The DfE also provides a capital maintenance fund for academies.

Currently the children receive a degree of Religious Education with a particular emphasis on the Church of England. Given that this is a non-denominational school and that plans are to join the ODST, will this element of the curriculum gain greater importance?

No. The school's current provision meets the requirements placed on community schools; that will not change.

Will becoming an Academy affect recruitment of new staff assuming that new members will not be eligible to join the current Teachers' Superannuation Scheme?

Terms and conditions for teachers will not be affected, for existing or new staff. All teachers are members of the Teachers' Pension Scheme, whether in academies or maintained schools or elsewhere.

Will services provided by the Oxfordshire Music Service continue if Academy status is achieved?

Not affected.

Why has the ODST been selected over and above other Academy groups?

ODST ensures that the ethos of primary education is secured (secondary and primary education is very different).

Why is a decision necessary now?

Withdrawal of OCC services and the political agenda for schools to collaborate and join in partnership with other schools as academies.

The school is currently subject to financial audits by OCC. How would an Academy be audited?

Finance systems, advice and audit are provided via ODST. The school's accounts will be rolled up into those of ODST and subject to full external audit, meeting the requirements placed on all charities. The audited accounts are published.