



Governors' Update

Academy Conversion - Update & Consultation

Since we last wrote to you in the Summer 2016 Leadership Newsletter, regarding the school's options for academisation, the governors have been busy exploring the options and possibilities open to the school.

What are Academies?

Academies are state-funded independent schools, receiving their funding directly from the government, rather than the Local Authority. They are overseen by individual charitable bodies called academy trusts. Under the present government, the Academy programme has been expanded to embrace all schools, putting more flexibility and ownership in the hands of individual schools, giving greater freedom to innovate and tailor provision to local needs and priorities.

Whilst government timescales and approaches have altered, the direction of travel remains the same and Multi-Academy Trusts have emerged as the preferred academy model. The proposed National Funding Formula for schools will have a significant impact on the Local Authority and therefore the support options available to schools. Schools need to ensure that they future-proof themselves against the financial and structural changes ahead.

What are the implications?

The stories in the press about the increasing pressures on school budgets are no fiction and finances are being squeezed. We anticipate that Herts for Learning (HfL), the schools improvement partner linked to the local authority, will also lose a significant proportion of its funding, reducing the services currently avail-

able to schools, or increasing the costs of buying them.

What next for Grove Road?

Doing nothing is no longer a sensible option and we have done a great deal of information gathering to determine the options available and the best pathway for the children of Grove Road.

Tring School have also been scanning the education horizons and have made the decision to convert from a Single stand-alone Academy to become a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT), inviting other local schools to join them in forming a local learning partnership.

Grove Road has been heavily involved in the discussions that have helped shape the direction this MAT might take to maximise the opportunities for collaboration amongst local schools, which could benefit the local community and its young people.

To explore this option more, the governors have formally agreed to pursue the next steps to initiate conversion to academy status for Grove Road with a view to joining a local MAT.



What are the advantages of joining a local MAT?

Tring's geography already supports lots of informal collaboration amongst local schools. A local partnership in the form of a Multi-Academy Trust would further enhance the potential for all sorts of cost savings, economies of scale and enhanced purchasing power.

Educational and learning opportunities include improved curriculum links between the schools; even better transitions from primary to secondary; opportunities for staff to work across key stages (e.g. KS2 - KS3) to enhance expectations and understanding, as well as staff development opportunities – all of which could help staff recruitment and retention, which is becoming a more significant issue due to the high cost of living locally.

Long term, we are also keen to ensure support and oversight structures between the schools, particularly if the role of the Local Authority becomes less accessible. In a MAT we could still purchase the training and support on offer, but we would be setting up layers of support for the future in the event of less LA oversight.

Joining a local cross-phase MAT would enhance the existing transition support, building upon what is already in place to ensure the children's education journey is seamless from the moment they join Nursery at 3, through to the point when they leave school at 18.

What difference will it make?

We are hoping from the outside there will be very little obvious change. The uniform, the staff and the name will all be exactly the same. Behind the scenes things will work a little differently. The school will have a different bank account, we might purchase supplies and stock from different companies but day to day you probably won't see any difference. The children might notice more opportunities to use facilities at Tring and our ex-pupils in Y7 might notice some familiar faces in front of them, but most of the chang-

es will happen behind the scenes to enhance provision and transition.

What happens next?

Following a 12 month period of due diligence, the full governing body has voted to pursue the next steps to initiate conversion to academy status, with a view to joining the local MAT with Tring School.

We have registered this proposal with the DfE and the LA for approval. Another important part of this phase is to launch a formal consultation with you, the parents and then with staff. This is a crucial part of the process, which takes place in tandem with a host of other tasks that will be completed over the summer term.

What do you think?

We are keen to hear your views and your questions. To explain the process more fully and give you the opportunity to ask questions **we would like to invite you to a consultation meeting on Thursday 15th June at 7pm**. We will talk to you more fully about the options we have been exploring, the choices made and why, and the time line for the conversion process.

Please don't worry if you can't be there in person. We have set up a section on the website specifically relating to the academy conversion process and we will be posting and updating FAQs from both the consultation evening, and also any we receive by email. Your questions will help governors shape the next steps of the process and understand more fully what is important to you.

Please come and take this opportunity to share your views and find out more.

We're not in a rush but there is no obvious advantage to sitting on the side-lines and watching others shape our future. Ultimately, it's about the children. We feel that converting to an academy and joining a MAT will offer long term benefits in terms of expected standards and pupil outcomes.

Frequently Asked Questions

Will this mean another new uniform?

No, the uniform and the House system will remain unchanged if we join a local MAT.

Will the school name have to change?

No, we will still be called Grove Road Primary School. The name of the MAT has not yet been decided.

Who will be running the school?

Grove Road will still have its own leadership team and its own Head. There are no plans to change this while the budget can still sustain it. The full governing body will likely reduce in size to form a local governing body. They will all be accountable to a board of MAT trustees who will oversee all the schools in the MAT.

When will Grove Road become an Academy?

If each stage is successful we are likely to convert during the Autumn of 2017. Nothing is definite until the secretary of state for education and the school signs the agreement.

Is there a financial cost to the school?

We can apply for a £25,000 government grant to help with any costs linked to the conversion, such as legal fees. The process has been greatly simplified since the first phase of schools converted, reducing the cost and time associated with conversion. We don't anticipate any financial costs beyond that funded by the grant.

Will the school have more money if it becomes an Academy?

The school will still have its own budget allocation from the DfE, but instead of this coming via the Local Authority, it will come via the MAT. Currently the LA keeps a percentage of this allocation. As an academy it is likely that more of that allocation will come to us, but there will still be a percentage of the budget that goes to the central MAT. Specific figures will be available once we are able to get funding details from the DfE about budget shares. To get more specific financial information we need to progress to the next stage in the process.

Will the schools in the MAT have the same holidays?

This is certainly one of the things that would be agreed across the MAT to help families with siblings at different schools, just as all maintained schools currently have the same holidays. We will also aim to set INSET days together as far as possible.

If you have any questions, please email us at:

governors@groveroad.herts.sch.uk

We can then add your questions to the website FAQs and make sure we include them at the consultation meeting on 15th June.

If you would like to join us on 15th June you can book a place on-line using our usual on-line booking system.

<https://groveroad.parentseveningsystem.co.uk/>
