



Dear Stakeholder

3rd December 2018

As you may already be aware, the governing body of the Federation of St Francis Special School Lincoln and Lincoln St Christopher's School have applied to become an academy under the Academies Act 2010. It is proposed that the school will convert to join Community Inclusive Trust, an existing multi-academy which currently operates a number of academies within Lincolnshire. **From the 10th December 2018** the governing body will be consulting on whether the school's conversion to academy status should take place. Further information about what becoming an academy means, and how to comment on the proposals, is set out below.

Will the Federation of St Francis Special School Lincoln and Lincoln St Christopher's School definitely become an academy?

The governing body has submitted an application to convert to academy status and is working towards a conversion on 1st July 2019. However, the school is not obligated to become an academy until the contract between the academy trust and the Department for Education (known as the Funding Agreement) is signed. The academy trust will not sign the Funding Agreement until parents and carers of pupils at the school, and parents and carers of those pupils joining next year, staff at the school, the pupils themselves and other stakeholders have had the opportunity to comment on the proposals.

We are inviting all parents and carers to meetings on Monday 10th December 2018. The meetings will also be open to stakeholders and staff to learn more about the proposals to become an academy, or to comment on the proposals. We will be keeping pupils informed throughout the process via assemblies.

Any comments or representations which are made about the proposals will be considered by the governing body before a decision is taken to finally proceed with conversion and sign the Funding Agreement. Details of how to provide comments and representations are set out below. The governing body will not take a final decision to proceed with the conversion and authorise the academy trust to sign the Funding Agreement unless they are content that conversion would be in the best interests of the school taking account of all of the legal and practical ramifications.

What is an academy?

An academy is essentially an independent school which is funded by the state. It is independent of the local authority and receives its funding direct from central government. Previously academies have tended to replace schools which have poor results or otherwise needed to improve. Under the Academies Act 2010, all schools are able to become academies.

What are the benefits of being an academy?

- Academies are independent of local authority control – this means that academies have more freedom about how they conduct themselves

- Academies receive their funding direct from central government – this means that academies receive more funding because none is retained by the local authority for the provision of central services
- Academies have more freedom over the curriculum taught – this means that academies do not need to teach parts of the National Curriculum which they do not consider is appropriate for their pupils
- Academies can set their own pay and conditions of service for their staff – academies have the freedom to alter the pay and conditions of their staff (subject to normal employment law protections for staff) and so can provide staff with better pay and conditions than previously
- Academies have more freedom to undertake innovative projects – academies are companies and so have more freedom to undertake innovative projects, such as setting up and utilising trading subsidiaries

Are there any disadvantages to becoming an academy?

As an academy, the academy trust will be directly liable for matters such as insurance, employment liabilities, pensions, health and safety, and property maintenance. However, as mentioned above, academies receive more funding from central government to help them meet these additional costs and the school is proposing to join an established multi-academy trust, Community Inclusive Trust, which has experience of managing these additional responsibilities.

Will the admissions arrangements change?

As an academy, the academy trust (rather than the local authority) will become the admissions authority for the school. The academy trust will still be bound by the School Admissions Code, and School Admissions Appeals Code. As an academy, we will be in a position to put in place our own admission arrangements, and decide which pupils should be offered places in accordance with those arrangements. However, the current admission arrangements will remain in place for the time being. If the academy wanted to change its admission arrangements consultation would be required in accordance with the School Admissions Code.

Will staff leave?

If the school converts to an academy, all staff employed by the local authority at the time of conversion will automatically transfer to the new academy on their current pay, conditions and contractual arrangements. Although the academy will have more freedom to amend those pay and conditions in the future, the Governing Body does not intend to take such a step in the foreseeable future and in any event, any change to pay and conditions would need to be consulted upon with staff representatives in the usual way. Specific communications with staff will be held at a later date subject to the outcome of this wider stakeholder consultation.

Will the Federation of St Francis Special School Lincoln and Lincoln St Christopher's School change?

We want to continue to be a central part of the community. We therefore do not intend to change the schools except in ways which we think will improve them even more. For students, it is unlikely that they will see much, if any, change in their day to day school lives. Academies do have the power to vary their curriculums and vary the length of the school day, however, we do not intend to take any such steps at this stage and would engage with parents/carers, staff and students if we did ever intend to make such changes in the future.

How can I find out more?

Meetings will be held at the schools on Monday 10th of December 2018

8.20 a.m. – St Francis School – staff and nursing team

1.30 p.m. – St Francis School – parents and other stakeholders

3.30 p.m. – St Christopher’s School – staff

4.30 p.m. – St Christopher’s School – parents and other stakeholders

We would encourage you to attend if you have any questions, or simply want to learn more.

There is also more information about academies on the DfE website:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/academies>

If you can’t find the answer to your question here, or on the DfE website, and cannot attend the meeting on Monday 10th December 2018, please email louise.perkins@citacademies.co.uk who will try to assist.

How can I make representations?

To respond to this consultation on whether the conversion of the school to academy status should take place:

- Via email to the Clerk to Governors - Sue.eglinton@lincolnshire.gov.uk
- Via letter to the Clerk to Governors - Sue Eglinton c/o St Francis School, Wickenby Crescent, Lincoln, LN1 3TJ
- Using the comments slips at the meetings and in the school offices and leaving them with reception.
- By comments at the meetings which will be minuted.

The **closing date for representations to be made is 6 weeks later on the 21st January 2019 at 5pm.**

Yours sincerely



Ann Hoffmann

Acting Executive Head Teacher