



Monday 17<sup>th</sup> June 2024

Dear Stakeholder,

### **Consultation to convert to Academy status and join Four Rivers Multi-Academy Trust**

Our Governing Board has been carefully reviewing its options to become an academy and it has decided to consult with parents, carers, staff and other stakeholders, on whether the school should become an academy and join Four Rivers Multi-Academy Trust.

This is a recently formed trust that is currently made up of four schools in the Stockport area – Norbury Hall Primary School, Dial Park Primary School, Lisburne School and Oakgrove School.

All schools in the Four Rivers Multi-Academy Trust share the ultimate vision and aim that every learner in the family of schools will succeed, whatever the context and this aligns with our vision at High Lane. Over a number of years, we have regularly worked closely with schools in the trust, and this relationship will continue to be further enhanced next academic year. We now feel the time is right to formalise our relationship and join the Four Rivers Multi-Academy Trust.

We are therefore commencing formal consultation today, Monday 17<sup>th</sup> June 2024, for a period of four school term weeks. Consultation will therefore end at 3pm on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> July.

#### **What is an Academy?**

Academies are state schools, funded directly from central government, no longer under the control of the Local Authority. Academy status gives schools more freedom to be innovative and creative with the curriculum, timetabling, staffing and governance.

All academies continue to be inspected by Ofsted and comply with the same rules as other schools on special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), exclusions and admissions.

An academy is part of a charitable trust (the MAT) run by a board of trustees. Trusts and their academies are rightly expected to work with and support other schools, including vulnerable schools. Should you wish to know more about the Government's policy, the Department for Education has its own academies bookmark on <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/convert-to-an-academy-information-for-schools>

#### **What is a Multi Academy Trust (MAT)?**

A Multi Academy Trust is a charitable company and is responsible for overseeing the running of a number of schools. It has three layers of governance: the Members; the Directors; and the Local Governing Bodies.

A MAT is formed when its articles (legal document) are approved by the DfE and it is registered at Companies House as a company. MATs are made up of a number of academy schools – some are just primary school MATs, others will have secondary schools in them and some will include Special Schools too. It is usual for MATs to have periods of growth, when a number of schools might join and then some period of consolidation. There isn't a set number of schools that makes a MAT. The partnership established between all schools in the MAT ensures that the schools can share skills and best practice and make optimum use of resources ensuring best value for money for each school.

In many ways the children will not notice any immediate difference, they will be in the same uniform, in the same classrooms with the same teaching staff. However, in time the children will perhaps notice changes and improvements in the way that they learn for example and have greater links with each school within the Trust.

### **What will be the main benefits for schools within Four Rivers Multi-Academy Trust?**

- Access to high quality staff, including a Trust leadership team who will be sharply focussed on securing excellence.
- Moderation of standards across the partnership of schools to ensure the highest quality provision
- Greater control over finances and the money due to schools.
- Educational benefits for students as a result of additional freedoms available to academies in terms of the curriculum we offer, and how we prioritise resources.
- The opportunity to work in close and formalised partnership with other schools and share expertise and services that will benefit all of our students and staff.
- Sharing resources and expertise, allows us to target funding towards improving front line teaching and learning.
- Develop our own solutions collaboratively.

### **What additional responsibilities will Academy status bring?**

- Currently the Local Authority employs our staff – going forward the Multi-Academy Trust would be the employer rather than the LA.
- The Academy Trust would be responsible for admissions rather than the LA (although the Local Authority would still co-ordinate and ensure the Trust adopts clear and fair admission arrangements in line with the admissions law and the School Admissions Code).
- The Academy Trust would enter into a 125-year lease for the land, usually owned by the Local Authority. We already have responsibility for the cost of maintaining the land and buildings.

### **Will any changes to the school be made as a result of conversion?**

We do not intend to make any changes to the day-to-day work of the school following conversion, other than to adjust the governance arrangements and accountability that comes with working within a Multi-Academy Trust and to bring closer working practices between the schools in the Trust. More information on the process and the answers to many of the questions you may have can be found in the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document attached with this letter.

### **How do I learn more, and how do I respond to the consultation?**

We are consulting with everyone associated with our school and, at this stage, we are not committing the school to conversion to academy status or to joining Four Rivers Multi-Academy Trust.

The Governing Body would very much like to hear your opinion.

If you wish to respond in writing to the consultation, we ask that you let us have your views by emailing the attached feedback template to [admin@highlane.stockport.sch.uk](mailto:admin@highlane.stockport.sch.uk) by **3pm on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> July 2024**. Please include your name and contact details.

Whilst we do not anticipate responding to each and every communication, we will provide answers to questions via the FAQs and we welcome your views. Please be assured your views will be taken into consideration by our Governing Body when they meet to make decisions moving forward.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> June 2024 and the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2024, the FAQs document will be updated and shared on our website to reflect any questions that are pertinent to our wider community.

Following the closure of the formal consultation period the Governing Body will meet to consider how to proceed and the outcome of the consultation process will be shared with you as soon as practicable following the meeting.

Yours sincerely,



Headteacher



Chair of Governors