

To all parents of children attending Our Lady's – January 14th 2022

Dear Parents

We hope that all parents understand and appreciate that governors are as committed as the staff in doing all we can to further the high quality education provided for our children in such a caring and nurturing environment. We were delighted by the successful OFSTED inspection that took place in November which acknowledges that Our Lady's, Princethorpe is not just a 'good' school but one in which ***'the pupils think their school is fantastic'***. We are very proud to serve as governors and now we want to share with parents important news about the future of our wonderful school.

Our Lady's Princethorpe operates as one of 240 schools within the Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham; our land and buildings are owned by the diocese. From 2014 the **Diocesan Education Service (DES)** began the process of supporting their schools to 'convert to **academy status**' and established a number of **Multi-Academy Companies (MACs)** where groups of schools would work together.

Along with 10 other RC primary schools in south and east Warwickshire the DES has proposed that Our Lady's join with an already established MAC - **Our Lady of the Magnificat**. This is currently a family of twelve schools, led by Tom Leverage, the CSEL (Catholic Senior Executive Leader) of the MAC; governors have held meetings with him and other leading figures in the DES, in person and on Teams, to discuss the merits of joining this MAC. Mrs Batson has met with a number of the Heads of other schools that have agreed to be part of this process; our vice-Chair of Governors, Amy Husband (who as many of you know is an elected parent governor) has had considerable experience of operating within a multi-academy in Coventry. It was the unanimous decision of the governing body to initiate the process of joining this MAC. Mrs Batson and the governors believe that there are considerable benefits that should accrue to Our Lady's, in particular the opportunities to share resources and training with other schools within our locality provide distinct advantages which, in time, should further improve the quality of education staff provide your children. **Parents and staff can be assured that the essential character and ethos of Our Lady's will remain unchanged** and governors are as committed as ever to this. The experience of the 143 other schools that have already travelled along this road before us is very reassuring in this regard. Nevertheless it is important that parents have the opportunity to make comments or ask questions (see below) and we invite you to respond by February 11th 2022.

We would encourage you to visit the website [Joining our Multi Academy – Our Lady of the Magnificat](#) which provides answer to frequently asked questions and further information on joining this Multi-Academy. I have summarised some of the main FAQs and answers below.

With very best wishes

Peter Griffin (Chair of Governors)

On behalf of all the Governing Body of Our Lady's, Princethorpe

Given understandable concerns about Covid we have not set a date for parents to attend a meeting at school to ask questions and make comments. In the first instance we invite parents to visit the MAC website and, if you have specific questions, particularly with regard to Our Lady's we encourage you to email one of the governors below, putting **Academisation consultation** in the subject heading:

Peter Griffin (Chair) griffin.p@ourladysprincethorpe.co.uk

Amy Husband (Vice-Chair and parent governor) : husband.a@ourladysprincethorpe.co.uk

Chris Bartup (parent governor): bartup.c@ourladysprincethorpe.co.uk

If there is sufficient interest expressed in holding a meeting and Covid restrictions allow for this we will notify parents via the weekly newsletter.

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

What is an Academy?

Academies are publicly funded independent schools that are not managed by a local authority but their funding and accountability is directly with the DfE (Department for Education).

What is a Multi-Academy Company?

A Multi-Academy Company is an academy trust that operates more than one academy school. Academy schools are state-funded schools in England which are directly funded by the Department for Education and independent of local authority control.

Why would a school become an Academy?

Academies take with them a portion of the money held by the Local Authority to run central support services to schools. As more schools convert to academies, these central funds have diminished to such an extent in Warwickshire that most services now operate on a 'traded service' basis..

We believe the advantages of being an academy include:

- Greater support for operational and strategic support of the school such as Finance, HR, IT and Estates Management.
- Access to a wider range of CPD opportunities for all staff.
- Freedom to develop the curriculum to meet the needs of our particular children.
- Academies have greater financial control and freedom to address shared priorities.
- Regular meetings with peers and Senior leaders.
- Governor training and development programmes.
- Targeted financial support.
- Marketing and communication support.
- Collective worship across the Multi Academy.

Does the school need agreement from the Local Authority to become an Academy?

No. The Academies Act 2010 has removed the need for the Local Authority to approve plans for the school to become an Academy. Warwickshire Local Authority is 'Academy Neutral' in its stance has already supported a large number of schools in becoming Academies

What form of relationship will exist between the Local Authority and the school?

The Local Authority retains statutory duties for aspects of Special Educational Needs, admissions coordination and provision of home-to-school transport. Local Authorities are also expected to play a key strategic role locally in areas such as pupil place planning, admissions and sharing good practice.

We have very good relations with Warwickshire County Council and other neighbouring schools and will continue to work with them in a spirit of cooperation after conversion.

Are Academies subject to the same Ofsted, and in the case of church schools Section 48, inspection regime?

Yes, Schools converting to Academies will continue to be inspected in the normal way.

Will we get more money as an Academy?

Academies receive the same amount of per-pupil funding as they would receive from the Local Authority as a maintained school plus an additional 'Education Services Grant' to reflect funding held centrally by Local Authorities. The Government is clear that becoming an Academy should not bring about a financial advantage or disadvantage to a school. However, academies do have greater freedom to decide how they use their entire budget.

Will becoming an Academy affect our admissions arrangements?

The process for admissions – coordinated by the Local Authority – will remain the same. In the same way as maintained schools, all academies are required to adopt clear and fair admission arrangements in line with the admissions law and the School Admissions Code.

Will our responsibilities in relation to Special Educational Needs and exclusions change?

No. Responsibilities as an Academy in relation to Special Educational Needs and exclusions will be just the same as they are now as a maintained school.

Can a child with a statement of Special Educational Needs nominate an academy as their school of choice?

Yes. These arrangements and related processes must at all times comply with the School Admissions Code and responsibilities as an Academy in relation to Special Educational Needs will be just the same as they are now as a maintained school.