

Rochford Primary and Nursery School – proposal to become an academy and join the South Essex Academy Trust

As you may already be aware, the governing body of Rochford Primary and Nursery School has applied to become an academy under the Academies Act 2010 and is proposing to join the South Essex Academies Trust. Further information about what becoming an academy means, and how to comment on the proposals, is set out below.

Will Rochford Primary and Nursery School definitely become an academy?

The governing body has submitted an application to convert to academy status and is working towards a conversion in March 2014. However, the school is not obligated to become an academy until the contract between the multi 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, staff at the school, and pupils themselves have had the opportunity to comment on the proposals. We have written to all parents and carers and have also invited them to a meeting on [] at [], to learn more about the proposals to become an academy, or to comment on the proposals. We have also held meetings with staff, and will be keeping pupils informed throughout the process.

Any comments or representations which are made about the proposals will be considered by the governing body before it takes the final decision to convert to academy status. Details of how to provide comments and representations are set out below.

The governing body will not vote to proceed with academy conversion 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. We are proposing to become an academy as part of the South Essex Academy Trust. This means that we will be part of an academy group comprising Westcliff High School for Girls and Prince Avenue Primary School.

What are the benefits of being an academy?

In the school's opinion the benefits are numerous:

- **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 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?

The South Essex 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. Westcliff High School for Girls already deals with these matters for itself and will support ourselves and Prince Avenue Primary School through the SEAT.

Will the admissions arrangements change?

As a foundation school Rochford Primary and Nursery School already deals with its own admission arrangements. As an academy, the SEAT will deal with admission arrangements and would also still be bound by the national Admissions Code, and Admissions Appeals Code.

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.

Will staff leave?

If the school converts to an academy, all staff currently employed by the school will automatically transfer to the new academy on their current pay and conditions. 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.

Will Rochford Primary and Nursery School change?

We do not intend to change Rochford Primary and Nursery School except in ways which we think will improve the school even more. For example we want to develop our work with other schools to benefit the children. For pupils, it is unlikely that they will see much, if any, change in their day to day school lives, at least in the first instance.

Academies do have the power to vary their curriculums and vary the length of the school day, however, it is not intended to take any such steps at this stage and would engage with parents/carers, staff and pupils if we did ever intend to make such changes in the future.

How can I find out more?

A meeting will be held at the school on [] at []. 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 [], please email admin@rochford.essex.sch.uk who will try to assist.

How can I make representations?

The closing date for representations to be made is Friday 10th January 2014. Representations can be made in writing to:

Ms. J. Crawley (clerk to the governing body)

Rochford Primary and Nursery School

Ashingdon Rd.,

Rochford

Essex

SS4 1NJ

Or by email to: admin@rochford.essex.sch.uk