

Oaklands Junior School



Headteacher
Mrs H West

18th September 2017

Dear Parent/Carer

Proposed Conversion to Academy Status

As you may already be aware, the governing bodies of Edgbarrow School, Hatch Ride School, Oaklands Infant School and Oaklands Junior School have been granted an academy order under the Academies Act 2010 and are proposing to form The Corvus Learning Trust, a multi academy trust which would operate all four schools. In accordance with the requirements of the Academies Act 2010, the governing bodies of our four schools are consulting on whether the schools' academy conversion should take place. Further information about what becoming an academy means, and how to comment on the proposals, is set out below.

Will Oaklands Junior School definitely become an Academy?

The governing body has submitted an application to convert to academy status and is working towards a conversion in December 2017. 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 schools and of children in years 5 and 6 of Edgbarrow's other feeder primary schools, staff at the schools, and pupils themselves have had the opportunity to comment on whether the school's academy conversion should take place. We are also holding 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 school governing body before they take a final decision to sign the Funding Agreement. Details of how to provide comments and representations are set out below.

The Funding Agreement will not be signed unless the governing body and the Trustees are content that conversion would be in the best interests of Oaklands Junior 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.



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It is proposed that each school will become an academy as part of The Corvus Learning Trust. This means that the school will be part of an academy group comprising Edgbarrow School, Hatch Ride School, Oaklands Infant School and Oaklands Junior School.

What are the benefits of being an academy?

In the school's opinion the benefits are numerous:

- **academy primary schools and secondary schools working more closely with each other** – this means pupils within the Crowthorne community will benefit from better continuity and consistency between school phases
- **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 Corvus Learning 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.

Will the admissions arrangements change?

As four schools are community schools the admissions authority is the local authority which means that their admissions arrangements are set by the local authority, and the local authority also decides which pupils should be offered places at the school. Following academy conversion, The Corvus Learning Trust would put in place admission arrangements for each of its academy schools, and decide which pupils should be offered places in accordance with those arrangements. The Trust and therefore the academy schools would still be bound by the national School Admissions Code, and School Admissions Appeals Code.

The current admission arrangements will remain in place for the time being. If the Trust 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 currently employed by the local authority 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 Oaklands Junior School change?

We do not intend to change Oaklands Junior School except in ways which we think will improve the school even more. For pupils, 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, it is not intended to take any such steps at this stage and we 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?

We would like to invite all parents and carers to a Consultation Open Day on Tuesday 3rd October between 10.00am-4.00pm at Edgbarrow School to learn more about the proposals to become an academy, or to comment on the proposals. Staff will be available throughout the Open Day and presentations will be given at 10.00am, 12.00pm and 2.00pm. Additional evening meetings will be held at Oaklands Junior School (for the parents of all three primary schools) on Tuesday 10th October at 6.30-8.00pm and at Edgbarrow School on Thursday 12th October, 6.30pm-8.00pm.

We would encourage you to attend one of these meetings 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 any of our meetings please email consultation@edgbarrowschool.co.uk who will try to assist.

How can I make representations?

To respond to this consultation on whether the school's academy conversion should take place, representations can be made in writing to:

Clerk to the Governors
Oaklands Junior School
Butler Road
Crowthorne
RG45 6QZ

Or by email to: consultation@edgbarrowschool.co.uk

The closing date for representations to be made is Friday 20th October.

We look forward to seeing you at one of the meetings.

Yours faithfully



Mr John McLaren
Chair of Governors