



## **Proposal for our federation to join a Multi Academy Trust**

### **Frequently Asked Questions (updated 28.02.25)**

As you may already be aware, the governing body of Wood Street Infant School & Worplesdon Primary School have applied to become an academy under the Academies Act 2010 and are proposing to join South Farnham Educational Trust. The governing body is now 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. This document will be updated for any questions received as part of the consultation process.

#### **Will The Federated Schools of Wood Street Infant School & Worplesdon Primary School definitely become an academies?**

The governing body has submitted an application to convert to academy status and is working towards a conversion by summer 2025. However, the schools are not obligated to become academies 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 schools, staff at the schools, and pupils themselves have had the opportunity to comment on the proposals. Kareen O'Brien is writing to all parents and carers and will also invite them to a meeting (date to be confirmed) to learn more about the proposals to become an academy, or to comment on the proposals. We will also hold 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 bodies before they take the final decision to convert to academy status.

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 schools, 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 two academies as part of the South Farnham Educational Trust (SFET). This means that we will be part of an academy group comprising South Farnham School, The Raleigh School, Highfield South Farnham, Wallace Fields Infant School and Nursery, Busbridge Infant School, Great Bookham School, Normandy Village School, Kings Furlong Infant School Nursery, Brighton Hill Community School and The Blue Coat School Basingstoke and any proposed new schools.

#### **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
- 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.

There is also more information about academies on the DfE website: <http://www.education.gov.uk/academies>

#### **Are there any disadvantages to becoming an academy?**



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South Farnham Educational 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 in any event, the South Farnham Educational Trust already deals with these matters for the other academies it supports.

Once the school has converted, there is currently no route to revert back to being a maintained school under local authority control – academy conversion is a permanent change.

If the school was underperforming in the future, the Secretary of State may have the power to force the school (as an academy) to transfer to a different academy trust. However, in those circumstances, it is likely that the Secretary of State would have the power to intervene even if the school remained a local authority maintained school.

### **What is the proposed timescale?**

The governing body and South Farnham Educational Trust are working towards a conversion by summer 2025, subject to the results of the consultations underway and a funding agreement being agreed.

The governing body will meet to consider the results of this consultation process.

### **What will the governance arrangements be?**

The Local Authority retain responsibility for the school until any academy conversion is confirmed.

If conversion happens then responsibility for the school would move to South Farnham Educational Trust. The Board of Directors of the Trust have delegated certain functions to be locally managed and a Local Governing Body would have general responsibility for the effective management of the school.

Local management allows individual needs to be met effectively. Through the school budget governors are able to target resources and develop the nature and character of the school to meet the needs and wishes of parents, children and staff.

The Local Governing Body would continue to include parent representatives, staff representatives, school leaders, and co-opted governors.

### **Will there be any staffing issues?**

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.

As part of the academisation process all staff employed by the school will move from being employees of Surrey County Council to being employees of South Farnham Educational Trust. The Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (known as TUPE) regulations protect the rights of all staff affected by the transfer.

A separate consultation will be held with staff, led by Surrey County Council.

### **Will the admissions arrangements change?**

As a community school The Federated Schools of Wood Street Infant School & Worplesdon Primary School's admissions arrangements are set by the local authority, and the local authority also decides which pupils should be offered places at the school. As an academy, South Farnham Educational Trust will put in place admission arrangements, and decide which pupils should be offered places in accordance with those arrangements. The academy will still be bound by the national School Admissions Code, and School Admission 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.

### **Future school numbers**

There are no plans to change the school numbers. Pupil numbers regularly vary across the County and the Trust will respond to future fluctuations appropriately.

### **What changes are proposed to the curriculum; balance between academic testing and wider curriculum and homework?**



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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 students if we did ever intend to make such changes in the future.

## **Will The Federated Schools of Wood Street Infant School & Worplesdon Primary School change?**

We do not intend to change The Federated Schools of Wood Street Infant School & Worplesdon Primary School except in ways which we think will improve the school even more. Examples of potential changes are improvement in IT facilities and networks, improvement in building maintenance etc. Any such changes would be for the local governing board for the schools and South Farnham Educational Trust to discuss in future – in the same way as currently the governors will discuss with Surrey County Council.

For pupils, it is unlikely that they will see much, if any, change in their day to day school lives.

This consultation process is the opportunity for parents to obtain details on the academisation process.

## **Will the name of the school change?**

We do not intend to make any changes to the schools names.

## **What will happen to school uniform?**

We do not intend to change the school uniform.

## **Where can I get further information or raise further questions?**

If you can't find the answer to your question here, or on the DfE website, please email your question(s) to the Chair of Governors [dphilpot@worplesdon.surrey.sch.uk](mailto:dphilpot@worplesdon.surrey.sch.uk) or [kglossop@worplesdon.surrey.sch.uk](mailto:kglossop@worplesdon.surrey.sch.uk) or representations can be made in writing to The Federated Schools of Wood Street Infant School & Worplesdon Primary School (handed to the school office).

The closing date for representations to be made is 29<sup>th</sup> April 2025.