

Friday 20th October 2017

Dear Parents and Carers,

Proposed conversion of Franciscan Primary School to become an academy and join Graveney Trust

The Governing Body of Franciscan Primary School is proposing to become an academy to join Graveney Trust and is now consulting with staff, parents, carers and other stakeholders as it is legally required to do under the Academies Act 2010.

In this letter we have summarised the main reasons why we believe becoming an academy and joining the Graveney Trust is in the best long-term interests of the school and our pupils.

Why is the Governing Body proposing that the school becomes an academy?

Franciscan Primary School is judged by Ofsted to be a Good school. The school has worked with staff to meet the needs of pupils and families and we intend to continue to do this. We will keep the same ethos of hard work, opportunity and high aspirations for all pupils, as well as continuing on our journey to being an even better school.

As a maintained school we are funded directly by the Local Authority and have enjoyed a strong working relationship with them. However, to continue to provide the quality of education that we do, we have to adapt to new circumstances and changing political priorities.

More and more schools within Wandsworth are becoming academies and as a result the level of support and services that the Local Authority can provide is reducing and becoming more expensive. We think it is right that we consider what opportunities are available to secure the successful future of Franciscan.

- As an academy, our funding will come directly from Central Government. We will continue to have full control over how money is spent within our school. We will take our own decisions about the level of services that we wish to continue to buy in from the Local Authority. We know that Local Authority budgets will continue to decline and that their capacity to provide services to schools will be diminished. We will be able to source services from other providers to ensure best value for money for the school
- We would focus spending where it is needed most – on teaching and learning.
- Being a member of a multi-academy trust (which we have explained below) means that we can share specialist teachers and resources between schools. This is especially important at a time when many schools are struggling to find the right teachers, or fund all the equipment they may need, for their pupils.
- Academy schools have more freedom over the curriculum and how it is taught. They do not have to teach parts of the National Curriculum that they do not consider is appropriate for their pupils. However, the school and the Trust believe that the National Curriculum is appropriate for the vast majority of our pupils and it would only be in very exceptional circumstances that the National Curriculum would be disapplied.
- Multi-academy trusts are able to purchase as a whole, thereby achieving economies of scale not accessible by schools as individuals. With ever tightening budgets, this will help our school to maintain and build upon the resources and standards that we aspire to.

Why are we joining Graveney Trust?

The Government's preference is for all schools to be academies, and to work as part of multi-academy trusts (these are charitable organisations set up to run and support groups of academies).

We are fortunate to have the opportunity to join a Trust that is looking to form stronger relationships with local primary schools and wants Franciscan to be part of its MAT (Multi-Academy Trust) alongside Tooting Primary. Some of the advantages would be:

- To provide us with a stable long term future for the school that lets us retain our ethos and integrity, keeping our uniqueness and vision.



- Getting support and challenge from partners to continue to improve the school.
- The close proximity of the initial three schools, which will provide opportunities for collaborative working.
- The proximity of Graveney will also make joint working easier, and provide more opportunities for pupils at Franciscan to experience secondary school specialist teaching.
- Opportunities for improved staff recruitment, development and retention within a larger organisation.
- Potential financial savings through shared resources.

What difference will becoming an academy make to me and my family?

Very little will change in the day to day running of the school. Having control over our future, and the support from a MAT will enable us to keep everything that is special about Franciscan and is one of the reasons we are proposing to become an academy and join Graveney Trust.

All staff (teachers, support staff etc.) will transfer to become members of staff of the Trust under the legal process called TUPE. This means that the employment rights will transfer to the Academy Trust under the same terms and conditions of employment and all pension rights and continuity of service record will be preserved.

The school will continue to have its own Governing Body with a similar composition which will include elected staff and parent governors. There will be opportunities for our governing body to be represented on the Trust Board.

We will still be inspected by Ofsted exactly as we are now. There are no plans to change term times, the school day, or admissions. **We are however, planning to amend the school name to Franciscan House and update the uniform.** For our existing parents, the new uniform will be subsidised in the first instance.

As an academy we would continue to provide for the range of needs of all the pupils on roll and, where a student has a statement/EHC Plan, they will continue to receive the support required by it.

Further information and having your say

On **Tuesday 7th November** we are holding a presentation and question and answer session at the school for you to hear more about the proposal and also ask any questions you may have. The presentation will take place twice on this day to allow as many people as possible to come. The first session takes place at **2.30pm** and the second at **6pm** We hope you will be able to attend one of the meetings.

You can find more information about the proposal to become an academy, a set of frequently asked questions, and an online survey so you can give us your views, on the school website (www.franciscan.wandsworth.sch.uk). If you prefer to give us your comments in writing, there is a form attached to this letter. Completed forms should be given to the school office by 24th November 2017.

What are the timescales if we do become an academy?

Academy consultation period – Thursday 19th October to Friday 24th November 2017

Presentation and Q+A session at school – Tuesday 7th November at 2.30pm or 6pm

Governors meet to consider outcomes of consultation and then publish a report – by 15th December 2017

Academy conversion and joining Graveney Trust - 1st April 2018

Thank you for reading this letter and please do take the time to let us have your views, either using the paper form attached, or via our online survey in the Consultation section at www.franciscan.wandsworth.sch.uk.

We look forward to seeing you at the presentation on Tuesday 7th November at 2.30pm or 6pm. There is more information about MATs on the DFE website at www.education.gov.uk/acadmies

If you wish to discuss this with the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, please call the school to make an appointment and we will be happy to meet with you.

Yours sincerely



Pat Andre- Watson
Headteacher



Kathy MacLean
Chair of Governors

**FRANCISCAN PRIMARY SCHOOL ACADEMY CONVERSION CONSULTATION
RESPONSE FORM**

Please share any other suggestions or comments you may have about the proposal to become an academy and join Graveney Trust (please continue on a separate sheet if necessary).

Please return your completed form to the school office by **Friday 24th November 2017**.