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**North Walsham High School Governing Board  
Academy Status Consultation  
Briefing Paper for Staff, Parents and Community**

## **Introduction**

North Walsham High School (NWS) is one of a small number of secondary schools in Norfolk which have not converted to become academies. As Norfolk County Council's funding and responsibilities for education have been reduced over the last three years the governors of NWS have looked at several options for academy conversion. We have been looking for partners who can help the school develop and retain strong local links and opportunities for students and staff.

We have now found an opportunity and a local partner which might meet the school's requirements. This briefing aims to give you information to describe the opportunity and gather your views.

A consultation period will run from Monday 18th September to Friday 6th October 2017 to share information and seek views from our community including parents and staff. The views of the Local Authority are also being sought.

When the consultation period is complete the governors will consider any responses and act in the best interests of the school and students when making a decision about academy conversion.

We welcome any comments or questions you may have which can be emailed to: [consultation@nwsh.uk](mailto:consultation@nwsh.uk) Alternatively written comments in an envelope marked "Academy Consultation" can be handed in at the school reception. Responses received after 6<sup>th</sup> October will not be considered.

Governors will attend the Parent's Forum to answer questions about academy conversion on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> September at 7.30pm. Governors will also attend one or more staff briefings to answer questions during the consultation period.

## **Why are the governors considering conversion to Academy status?**

The landscape of education in England is changing rapidly and our concern is that NWS could become isolated. The expectation of the government is that all schools will become academies, work together and support one another within the next few years. Local

Authority support for schools is diminishing as the government moves funding for education away from local council control. This shift in funding patterns reduces the scope for non-academy schools to apply for additional funding and support to enhance the educational experience of the pupils. In future support for school improvement will come mainly from academy trusts and teaching schools.

There is a possibility, if we do nothing, that in the future the school may be in the position of having to join an academy group which may not share our values.

Therefore we feel it is time to act to safeguard the ethos and success of our school, protect our students and staff from future isolation or loss of representation and to widen the support we can offer to other schools.

### **What is the opportunity?**

The emerging structure of education in England is built around a large number of Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs). A MAT is a charitable company which must operate as not-for-profit organisation in the interests of the community it serves. The funding for education is allocated by the Department for Education (DfE) directly to the MATs, none of the funding is retained for allocation by the Local Authority and the MAT has control over the use of the funds.

We think that NWHS has something to offer a wider community of schools and feel that when we work with other schools in the MAT we have chosen, all the schools will benefit.

If the governors decide to convert NWHS to become an academy, then we will choose to join The Yare Education Trust (<http://yareeducationtrust.org.uk/>).

The Yare Education Trust is a MAT which currently includes a large high school with a sixth form and three primary schools in the East Norwich area. The trust has plans for other local schools to join. The schools in the trust currently include:

- Thorpe St Andrew High School and Sixth Form
- Hillside Avenue Primary School and Nursery
- Dussindale Primary School
- Hemblington Primary School

In the near future The Federation of North Walsham Infant and Junior Schools is planning to join the Yare Education Trust. The federation is currently in the process of academy conversion.

### **Consultation and Conversion – possible timescale**

September/October 2017: consultation period.

October 2017: views from the consultation will be considered by Governors and the decision whether to proceed or not will be made.

Late Autumn Term 2017: If the decision is to proceed, the school will undertake the formal process of application to become an academy. If the application is approved by the Regional

Schools Commissioner's headteacher panel the formal approval will followed by the legal process of conversion. The legal process can take several weeks.

March or April 2018: NWHS will become an academy within the Yare Education Trust.

Students' education should not be affected during this period of change. The school will continue to operate as normal.

### **What is an Academy?**

An academy is a school which receives funding directly from the Department for Education rather than via the Local Authority (Norfolk County Council). From April 2018 there will be a national funding formula for all schools which is intended to ensure that all schools and academies will receive an equivalent amount of money based mainly on the number of pupils. Schools which are not academies currently receive less direct funding than academies because some of their funds are "de-delegated" back to the Local Authority to provide some shared services.

The government is reducing the amount of money allocated to local authorities to support and to improve schools. In future local authorities will have to compete directly with academy trusts and teaching schools for school improvement funding. Academies will be able to submit bids for additional funding through their MAT.

Academy trusts have:

- complete control of and responsibility for their own finances,
- the responsibility to manage the external services the schools require,
- the choice to work with external providers of the trust's choosing to secure best value.

### **Academy Governance**

If the decision is to convert, it will be the governing board's responsibility to pass a resolution to join the MAT. The MAT sets out the strategic vision for the trust and oversees the new governance structures we will work with.

The Yare Education Trust have a scheme of delegation which assigns considerable responsibility to local boards of governors. NWHS will retain a local governing board if we join the Yare Education Trust. The MAT board is accountable to the DfE for the overall performance of the trust.

### **Accountability**

- The Academy Trust is accountable for the management of the academies and directly accountable to the Department for Education (not the Local Authority).

### **Employment**

- The Academy Trust employs staff directly rather than the Local Authority.
- Staff terms and conditions of service can be set by the MAT. In the Yare Education Trust the existing schools have not been required to make changes to current arrangements.
- If the school converts to become an academy all staff will transfer to be employed by the MAT on their existing terms and conditions. The MAT is subject to the same requirements as an LA-maintained school for consultation on staff terms and conditions.

## **Site**

The land and buildings at NWHS would transfer from the Local Authority to the Academy Trust upon conversion (on a leasehold agreement). Under the lease agreement there can be greater flexibility over the use of the schools' buildings and site. NWHS would continue to work with a range of local organisations to support community use of the school buildings and facilities.

## **Admissions**

Academies are responsible for setting their own admissions policy but must comply with the Government's Schools' Admissions Code.

## **Freedoms**

- Academies are free to deliver the curriculum that best suits the students and community.
- Academies are free to set term dates in the same way as LA-maintained schools (any changes would be fully co-ordinated and consulted upon).
- Academies are monitored by Ofsted and the DfE.

## **What will be strengthened?**

- Control of our own curriculum for students and greater influence over primary and sixth form curriculum.
- Sharing of good practice across all phases of education.
- Continuity of education and opportunities for students post-16.
- Further strengthening of transition between schools.
- Professional development opportunities for all staff.
- Opportunities for greater funding flexibility and economy of scale at a time of cuts in education budgets.

## **Conclusion**

The governors of NWHS welcome all views from staff, parents, students and stakeholders in our community. We look forward to receiving your comments which will help us decide on the future status of the school.