



November 2018

Dear Parent/Carer

Proposed Conversion to Academy Status

This letter gives you information about our possible conversion to academy status. **We are in a position to choose if and when to convert to an academy on our own terms.** The current government policy is that all schools should convert to academy status and we wish to make an informed choice, rather than in the future being put under external pressure to convert.

If we do convert, schools can no longer do this as a single school but must form a multi-academy trust. Therefore, we have approached another school in Durham, Wellfield School, with a view to formulating a multi-academy trust.

I am therefore writing to consult with parents about the proposed conversion and would like to invite your views on the matter.

Let me, first of all explain why we are considering this change of status:

- We will have access to capital funding, currently not available to local authority schools, to further improve our school environment, something our old building desperately needs.
- Funding will come directly from central government, not through the local authority. This will give us greater freedom to spend our money where we think it will most benefit our children.
- By forming a Trust with other schools we will be able to work more collaboratively to raise standards of achievement and expand the range of opportunities we can offer your children.
- We will be able to provide greater opportunities for professional development for teachers, governors and school leaders.
- By converting to an academy now, we are able to choose a partner school who we want to work with.
- Economies of scale mean that, together, we can negotiate contracts and services that represent better value for money.

Some questions you may already have in mind

Is this the right time to consider converting to an academy?	Yes. We can choose whether or not to become an academy. Some local schools in the North East area have been judged 'Inadequate' and forced to join an academy chain. We are therefore in a totally different situation to them. We must consider the option to convert as part of our duty to safeguarding and improving the quality of education we can provide for our pupils
Has the decision to convert to an academy already been made?	No. Until the consultation has been completed and everyone's views have been obtained a decision will not be made. The Governing Body has to weigh up the pros and cons of academy conversion.

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What is a Multi Academy Trust (MAT)?	<p>Within a MAT all schools are governed by one academy trust. Each school retains its own governing body, which is represented on the multi-academy trust.</p> <p>The schools' governing bodies operate subject to the control of the trust which has ultimate responsibility for the running of the individual academies. The trust is accountable and responsible for the performance of each of the academies and may delegate its decision making powers to the governing bodies of the individual academies.</p> <p>As a MAT is a single entity, it is envisaged that schools can achieve strong collaboration and drive up standards by providing a consistent strategy and vision across schools working together.</p>
Would there be any changes to the admissions policy/criteria?	No. There are no plans to change the school's admission policy
Would the name of the school change?	No. The name would remain Tanfield School. Our signage and headed paper would acknowledge that we are part of a trust.
Would the school uniform change?	No. There are no plans to change the school uniform, or our expectations that it will be worn to a high standard.
Would the term and holiday dates or timing of the school day change?	No. We would continue to use the term dates published for Durham schools. There are no plans to change the school day.
What about the staff?	At present, all staff are employed by the Governing Body of the school rather than the Local Authority. If the school does become an academy, all staff will automatically transfer to the new academy trust, on their current pay and conditions. All new staff would be employed under current national pay and conditions agreements.

How can I find out more?

The best source of information on academies is the Government's own website:

<https://www.gov.uk/become-an-academy-information-for-schools>

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. The Governors and Leadership Team are committed to ensuring that Tanfield School continues to be a good school, serving all members of the community. It is our duty to explore every opportunity to maintain and improve our already high standards. Your feedback and views really do count and we will be holding a parents' evening on 6th December at 5pm if you would like to come along and discuss the proposal.

Yours faithfully



Steven Clough
Headteacher