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Executive Headteacher: Mrs Sylvie Newman
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Ashby Road
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Monday 25th April 2022

Dear Parents/Carers,

Consultation to convert to Academy status

You may well be aware that the Government is encouraging all schools to consider converting to Academy status and joining a Multi Academy Trust. The recent White Paper was very clear about the direction of travel for maintained schools. After careful consideration the School's Governing Body has decided that they wish to explore converting to academy status and joining Symphony Learning Trust.

We are writing to consult with staff, parents, and our local community partners to determine whether the School should proceed with conversion and we would like to invite your views on the matter.

What is an Academy?

Academies are publicly funded state schools that are independent of the Local Authority and receive funding directly from Central Government. The way that children are taught does not change, and they will still receive the same national curriculum.

What is a Multi Academy Trust?

An academy trust is a legal entity which runs schools. Symphony are a Multi Academy Trust, which means there are more than one school within the trust. The Government is not allowing schools to convert and become Single Academy Trusts any more – schools have to join a Multi Academy Trust.

In Symphony's case, they have 9 primary schools, all within Leicestershire, and Ashby Hill Top, with whom we work closely and share an Executive Headteacher are similarly exploring and consulting on joining Symphony.

Why is this being considered?

We work closely with Ashby Hill Top which is already an academy, and our Headteacher is currently the Headteacher at Ashby Hill Top as well. **There are no plans to change the headship arrangements at either school.** We are very conscious that the governmental direction, as evidenced in the recent White Paper, is very much about developing MATs of a sustainable size.

Joining a successful MAT allows our school leadership to benefit from a team of dedicated colleagues focussed on improving all of the schools in the trust, and realising some economies of scale through increased purchasing power, and sharing of costs across the whole trust.

What are the advantages for our school?

We know the team at Symphony very well- they already run two schools in Ashby, and this move will allow us to work closer together, for the benefit of the children in the town.

Symphony offer a dedicated focus on school improvement, with network groups of staff coming together across the breadth of the school to drive continuous improvements and sharing of best practice in how we work. We are excited to be able to access this extra level of development.



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Our ability to focus on children is improved by joining a MAT, as some of the back office/compliance elements of being an academy will be absorbed by the central team at Symphony. This means that we can get a greater level of consistency, as well as spend more of our time in school focused on delivering for our children.

Our current Headteacher will remain.

What are the disadvantages of joining a MAT?

We don't believe there are disadvantages to this proposal, but, recognise some of the concerns that people may have. Joining a trust would move the legal responsibility to the Board of Directors at Symphony, and we would have to follow the Scheme of Delegation. Symphony are committed to strong local governance, and our local governing body would remain, with significant delegated powers.

Will any changes to the School be made as a result of joining Symphony?

The school will retain its name, identity, values and the way we work. Day to day there will be very little that changes. The practical changes come in the extra support we are able to access, and the legal liabilities that the school currently has would reduce.

How to take part in the consultation process

At this stage we are not committing the School to convert and to join Symphony. We are consulting with everyone associated with our School before Governors meet again to make a final decision.

More information about Symphony is available at www.symphonylearningtrust.co.uk

We would ask that you let us have your views by completing this form:

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=F4esjTnEwUyWrHCDUaZRtdiurPTfZj5KtvGvKkunGqVUNVg1Rzg2NU1MODBLT011Q0YwOUNSSIZMMi4u>

Please add your comments by 12.00pm on Friday 11th June.

There will be an open meeting for you to come and raise any queries you may have or make comments about this on Tuesday 17th May at 6.00pm in the school hall at Donisthorpe Primary School. If you are unable to make this meeting but would like to ask any questions or make any comments please either telephone and ask to speak to Sylvie Newman or email slt@donisthorpe.leics.sch.uk by 12.00pm on Tuesday 17th May.

The consultation will close on Friday 11th June. The Governors will meet after this date to consider how to proceed.

Yours sincerely,

Jo Lee
Chair of Governors

Sylvie Newman
Executive Headteacher