

Bosley St Mary's CE [controlled] Primary School

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"Achievement for All in a Caring Christian Community"

2nd July 2019

Dear Parents/Carers

Bosley St Mary's C of E Primary School's mission statement is 'Achievement for All in a Caring Christian Community'. As a Governing Board, we have been reviewing how the school can best deliver that mission. We have come to the view that, rather than continue as we are, the school should join other schools in an Academy, specifically, the Rural Church Schools Academy Trust (RCSAT) is the Academy that we should join. We believe now is the time to widen the debate and to seek the views of the community and parents. All responses to this consultation will be given full consideration before the Governing Board will make any formal decisions about whether or not to proceed.

An Academy is a government-funded school that is independent of the local authority. In terms of the day-to-day functioning, an Academy school is not noticeably different to a Local Authority maintained school. Responsibility for funding the school, monitoring performance and any capital projects falls to central government rather to local government. Please note that a church school that converts to, or joins, an Academy will automatically maintain its religious designation as this cannot be changed.

Academy status gives schools additional responsibilities and greater freedoms. RCSAT, and other Academy trusts, are charitable companies and limited by guarantee. They are legal entities, and can therefore enter into contracts, employ staff, etc, whereas currently Cheshire East Council is the legal entity employing our school's staff, etc.

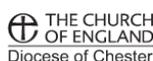
Over recent months, the Governing Board has been considering the possibility of joining the Rural Church Schools Academy Trust (RCSAT). We are united in wanting to ensure that the ethos and local governance of the school is maintained. We also want to secure the future for our unique school. The pace of change in education is relentless and the way schools are, and will be, funded brings its own challenges. Small, rural schools such as ours (which are often Church schools) have come under strong pressures in recent years, as the funding position has tightened. RCSAT was set up to help schools like ours to collaborate and to achieve more than they could do in isolation.

Joining RCSAT would not mean that the character, nature or ethos of the school would change. RCSAT currently has three schools within it, all of which are church schools and all have maintained their own ethos. They do however have a shared vision based on Christian values. Bosley St Mary's C of E Primary School has always valued its close relationship with St Mary's Church and Bosley Methodist Chapel. The links between the church, chapel and school are very strong. Our foundation governors provide an important link in this regard and becoming an Academy would not change our relationship with the Church or Chapel.

As a small church school we are not able to convert to Academy status on our own, but we could, if we wished, join with other schools in setting up a new Academy. However, we think it makes more sense to join an existing Academy which is already operating well, such as RCSAT.. The governance



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arrangements and day to day operations of the schools are embedded with cost efficiencies already being enjoyed.

More importantly, the expected impact on the education of children attending Bosley St Mary's C of E Primary school now and in the future will be positive with improved outcomes, an enhanced curriculum, a focus on the skills, strengths and needs of the pupils, delivered by great teachers in an excellent school environment. RCSAT has already established strong working partnerships between its current three schools and it has the structure and systems to enhance the provision for all staff and pupils.

In order to help us in reaching a decision we would very much like to hear from you about whether you agree that joining RCSAT would be in the best interests of the pupils now and in the future for Bosley St Mary's C of E Primary School. We welcome your views, questions and comments about this. The school has registered an interest in converting to an Academy, with the Department for Education. Following the consultation process, and subject to Governing Board agreement to proceed, both Bosley St Mary's C of E school and RCSAT will conduct a due diligence exercise. It is unlikely that we would be ready to join RCSAT before 1st April 2020.

The consultation will be carried out with as many stakeholders as possible to provide the Governors with a clear picture of the school community's views about this potential change. The final decision on whether or not to convert to join RCSAT lies entirely with the Governing Board. Please note that the formal consultation process opens today and closes at 5pm on Wednesday 18th September 2019 and we encourage you to present your support, views, questions and concerns. All submissions received by this date will be considered at a meeting of the full Governing Board in September 2019.

There are a couple of ways that you can submit your views:

- At an open meeting – dates will be published on the school website
- Completing the attached questionnaire and returning it to the school

Please refer to the school website (www.bosleyschool.co.uk) to find:

- Details of the consultation process
- A copy of the consultation questionnaire
- Links to the website of the Rural Church Schools Academy Trust (RCSAT)
<http://www.rcsat.cheshire.sch.uk/>
- Links to research entitled 'Running Rural Schools Efficiently'
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/running-rural-primary-schools-efficiently>
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) and answers

Please be assured that the Governing Body believes that considering everyone's views and opinions is vital in supporting them in making the right decision for the pupils of our school now and in the future.

Yours sincerely

Helen Rawlinson
Chair of Governors
On behalf of the Governing Board

