



St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School

Lindale Drive
Wombourne
Wolverhampton
WV5 8DZ

Head Teacher: Mrs J Keegan-Hobbs

Phone: 01902 894787

Fax: 01902 324114

E-mail: office@st-bernadettes.staffs.sch.uk

Website: www.st-bernadettes.staffs.sch.uk

3rd May 2019

Dear Parents,

I am writing to inform you about on-going discussions which have taken place between the governors of St Bernadette's and the Archdiocese of Birmingham.

The Archdiocese has the vision that all Catholic schools will eventually join together to form multi academy companies (MACs).

Currently, the schools local to us are part of a small Wolverhampton MAC (St Michael's, St Edmund's, SS Mary and John, SS Peter and Paul and St Teresa's).

There is another Catholic Wolverhampton MAC and the proposal is to merge the two MACs in order to create one Wolverhampton Catholic MAC in September which will be the St Francis and St Clare MAC.

The governors of St Bernadette's are exploring the option of becoming an academy in its own right and then becoming part of the Catholic Wolverhampton MAC, as recommended by the Archdiocese.

An academy is essentially an independent school which is funded by the state. It is independent of the local authority and receives its funding direct from central government. It is proposed that St Bernadette's will become an academy as part of the Catholic Wolverhampton MAC.



A meeting will be held at the school on Thursday, 20th June at 6.30pm. We would encourage you to attend if you have any questions, or simply want to learn more. There is also more information about academies on the DfE website: <http://www.education.gov.uk/academies>

I would like to reassure you that St Bernadette's will remain St Bernadette's - our ethos, mission and high expectations of our children will still be at the heart of what we do. We will still keep the same uniform, the same school rules, the same vision for all our stakeholders.

Please contact me or M. O Dwyer, chair of governors, if you have any comments to make and are unable to attend the meeting.

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely

J M Keegan-Hobbs

Overleaf is some information regarding academies which you may find helpful.



What are the benefits of being an academy?

In the school's opinion the benefits are numerous:

-academies are independent of local authority control - this means that academies have more freedom about how they conduct themselves

-academies receive their funding direct from central government - this means that academies receive more funding because none is retained by the local authority for the provision of central services

-academies have more freedom over the curriculum taught - this means that academies do not need to teach parts of the National Curriculum which they do not consider appropriate for their pupils

-academies can set their own pay and conditions of service for their staff
- academies have the freedom to alter the pay and conditions of their staff (subject to normal employment law protections for staff) and so can provide staff with better pay and conditions than previously

-academies have more freedom to undertake innovative projects - academies are companies and so have more freedom to undertake innovative projects, such as setting up and utilising trading subsidiaries.

Are there any disadvantages to becoming an academy?

The MAC will be directly liable for matters such as insurance, employment liabilities, pensions, health and safety, and, property maintenance. However, as mentioned above, academies receive more funding from central government to help them meet these additional costs.

Will the admissions arrangements change?

As a voluntary aided school, St Bernadette's already deals with its own admission arrangements. As an academy, the MAC will deal with admission arrangements and would also still be bound by the national Admissions Code, and Admissions Appeals Code.

The current admission arrangements will remain in place for the time being. If the academy wanted to change its admission arrangements consultation would be required.



Will staff leave?

If the school converts to an academy, all staff currently employed by the school will automatically transfer to the new academy on their current pay and conditions. Although the academy will have more freedom to amend those pay and conditions in the future, the Governing Body does not intend to take such a step in the foreseeable future and in any event, any change to pay and conditions would need to be consulted upon with staff representatives.

Will St Bernadette's change?

We do not intend to change St Bernadette's except in ways which we think will improve the school even more. For students, it is unlikely that they will see much, if any, change in their day to day school lives.

Academies do have the power to vary their curriculums and vary the length of the school day, however, it is not intended to take any such steps at this stage and would engage with parents/carers, staff and students if we did ever intend to make such changes in the future.

