



CONVERSION TO ACADEMY STATUS CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

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Introduction

Cyril Jackson Primary School is a highly successful school that serves its community exceptionally well. Over the past few months, the governors of Cyril Jackson have been considering the school's position on academy conversion and the potential advantages and routes towards academy status. Our aim is always to ensure that we provide the best education, the best care and guidance, and the best opportunities for the children and for the community we serve.

Many schools within the local authority are currently reviewing their status in light of the national academy agenda and the local Tower Hamlets context of pupil place planning. We have registered an interest with the Department for Education (DfE), met with existing academy trusts, attended expert seminars, visited schools that have converted to academy status, and sought information from numerous sources.

It is our proposal that Cyril Jackson should join the University Schools Trust (UST). UST is a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT). The schools within this Trust share our vision for the future; they are:

- St Paul's Way Trust School (Foundation School and Secondary School)
- Royal Greenwich Trust School

As you may already be aware, Gillian Kemp (executive headteacher) has been seconded to UST since April 2016, initially as their director of education and more recently as co-chief executive officer with Grahame Price, the former executive headteacher of St Paul's Way Trust School.

UST is a unique partnership of six world-leading universities and five sector-leading bodies who are working together to deliver a shared vision of inclusive, high-quality and transformational education delivered by schools which are deeply rooted in the communities they serve. The inspirational staff at Cyril Jackson and UST are our greatest resource, and we encourage all to innovate, share and continually raise our standards.

Each family at Cyril Jackson will receive a UST prospectus providing additional information on the MAT.

The rapid pace of educational reform and pressures on school funding create both a need and an opportunity for schools to work together to provide school-to-school support and to facilitate school improvement. Joining a MAT would provide a clear structure and mechanism for our schools to work together and to build upon our existing strengths. We wish to act now to define the MAT at this early stage, basing this on our own values and approaches and to control our own direction of travel both now and in the future.

Our reasons for seeking academy status and joining a MAT are summarised below:

- To develop the shared vision and values of our partnership working
- To deepen our collaboration to secure the best outcomes for all of our children
- To enhance and secure the provision for our children e.g. specialist teaching
- To create a family of schools and to develop a 'through school' framework
- To work together to improve teaching and learning and to develop our shared curriculum
- To enable our school leadership to focus more on teaching and learning and whole school improvement by reducing the administrative burden on individual schools on issues such as policy development and procurement
- To pool resources, services and support to ensure the best outcomes for all in our community
- To respect, maintain and develop each school's individual culture, values, ethos and identity
- To improve recruitment, retention, continuous professional development and succession planning
- To achieve economies of scale and to improve value for money
- To shape our own destiny within a changing school system

The strength of our schools and of our partnership working means we are confident that we have the vision, skill, talent and resources to serve the best interests of our community and to shape our own destiny. Working together in a MAT and with the Trust Partners of UST will enable our partnership to make a distinctive contribution to school improvement and to educational provision both within our MAT and beyond.

As a result of these discussions, the governors have decided that we should consult formally on whether Cyril Jackson Primary School should make an application to the DfE to convert to academy status.

Consultation Process

This consultation will be carried out with as many children, parents, staff and stakeholders as possible in order to provide the governors with a clear picture of the school community's views about this potential change.

Having registered an interest with the DfE, we have been able to receive more information about the process to convert. The final decision on whether or not to convert to academy status lies entirely with governing body. Please note that the formal consultation process will go on until Friday 12 July 2019, and we would encourage you to express your views and questions. All submissions received by this date will be considered at a meeting of the full governing body.

In order to help you to understand our proposal, we are providing you with an outline of what academies are. We have also set out our thinking on why we believe that becoming an academy is right for Cyril Jackson, and we have provided answers some of the questions which we think might arise.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is an academy?

Academies are publicly funded schools that are not managed by a local authority. Their independence means that they have more flexibility in some areas of decision-making than local authority maintained schools. They still have the same duty as local authority maintained schools to provide free education for local children and are subject to the same laws, regulations and codes when it comes to admissions, exclusions and SEN provision. Where several academies combine together to create a formal legal structure, this is known as a Multi-Academy Trust or MAT for short.

Why should Cyril Jackson become an academy?

In the Spring of 2019, the local authority wrote to all governors outlining the challenges of sustaining the number of schools in Tower Hamlets at a time when we are seeing an unprecedented drop in pupil numbers. Governors were asked to evaluate the school's viability in terms of pupil numbers and finances in the current academic year, and to project how (if at all) this might be different in three years and in five years. Several non-statutory support services which were once provided by the local authority have already been cancelled, or are earmarked for cancellation very soon. This means that a "do nothing" option simply is not viable.

The governors share a progressive vision for Cyril Jackson, and we believe that converting to academy status will give us the greatest chance of continuing with our current values and ethos. It can be hard to articulate our vision since it involves the "feel" of the school to a considerable degree. But broadly we think Cyril Jackson is a special place with much that is worth protecting and celebrating. We feel that the best chance of preserving all that is special about Cyril Jackson is to embrace the opportunity of converting to an academy, and that the values and objectives of the UST dovetail with our vision.

What are the advantages to Cyril Jackson?

In addition to preserving as much of our independence as possible, there are a number of practical advantages to academisation. We believe children and staff will benefit from the greater opportunities that formal partnership, through the MAT, will bring, which include:

- extending learning opportunities and activities for children
- enriching the curriculum through partnership working and shared resources
- enabling the sharing of excellent practice in teaching and learning
- enhancing the professional development of teaching and support staff
- building mutual support and accountability between the headteachers and governors of the different schools
- securing cost and resource efficiencies through joint commissioning of services

As an academy, we would be required to offer a broad and balanced curriculum, as we do now, including English, Maths and Science. We would not be required to adopt the National Curriculum. Although we are likely to continue to use the National Curriculum as our guiding document, there may be benefits in this flexibility that we would wish to explore in the future. These flexibilities may allow teachers to exercise more fully their professional judgement in the topics and context in which they teach their subjects, and this may allow children access to more personalised routes and opportunities.

If we became an academy, we would receive a £25,000 grant to support the conversion process.

Academies have control of all of their spending. We would continue to ensure that the focus of our investment remains the core business of the school: namely, teaching and learning. In a MAT, the process of managing budgets becomes more transparent as the funding is aligned to academic year, rather than financial years.

What are the potential risks of becoming an academy?

There will be costs involved in conversion, although these are likely to be covered by the conversion grant available to all schools going through the process.

There could, in theory, be potential additional financial liabilities, e.g. we will become fully liable for the cost of maintaining the school buildings. In practice, however, we are responsible for most of these costs now.

What would not change?

There will be very little that obviously changes in the day-to-day running of Cyril Jackson. Keeping all that is special about Cyril Jackson is one of the drivers for conversion. We hope that children and staff will not notice any differences. The governors are committed to retaining the existing name – Cyril Jackson Primary School – and there are no plans to alter the school uniform or the dates of school holidays.

We intend to remain a welcoming and inclusive school by adhering to the Local Authority's admissions criteria.

Initially, there will be no significant changes in our curriculum delivery. We would expect any changes that come about because of academy freedoms to be gradual and evolutionary, and led by our judgement about what is best for our children.

There will still be a governing body, with governors drawn, as now, from a range of stakeholder backgrounds. There will still be an opportunity for elected parents to join the governing body. We intend to ensure a high level of continuity in our governance during the conversion period.

Academies have a range of explicit freedoms not available to local authority, schools including setting the pay and conditions of staff. However, the governors of Cyril Jackson Primary School are committed to adhering to national agreements on pay and conditions.

It should also be noted that the employment rights of all current members of staff will be protected by TUPE (the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations). This means that these employment rights will transfer to the Academy Trust under the same terms and conditions of employment. Pension rights and continuity of service record will be preserved.

The school will be subject to the same cycle of Ofsted inspections.

The local authority will retain a monitoring role for all maintained schools in the Tower Hamlets, including academies.

Further Information

Further information about academies can be obtained from the Department for Education website:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/academies/academiesfaq/a0066018/conversion-process>

This is the definitive source of information about academies. It clearly encourages schools to convert to academies.

Submit Your Views

By email: admin@cyriljackson.towerhamlets.sch.uk

By post: in writing to the school at Cyril Jackson Primary School, Limehouse Causeway, London, E14 8AQ.

Please mark letters, and head emails, with 'Academy Consultation' so that they can be quickly forwarded.

Parents' Consultation Meetings

Wednesday 19 June 2019

9.00 am – Cyril Jackson Primary School, South Building Hall

2.30 pm – Cyril Jackson Primary School, South Building Hall

7.00 pm – Cyril Jackson Primary School, South Building Hall

You do not have to attend all of these meetings, but we would be very keen to see you at whichever of these meetings is convenient for you.

Kind regards,

Sue Stollery

Chair of Governors

Timeline

Spring 2017 to present	Governing body discussions about the future status of Cyril Jackson Primary School
14 May 2019	Governing body agree to send declaration of interest form to DfE
13 June 2019	LA to be informed of the application
14 June 2019	Consultation begins
14 June 2019	Staff informed
3.45pm, 18 June 2019	Staff meeting
9:00 am, 19 June 2019	Parents' meeting
2:30 pm, 19 June 2019	Parents' meeting
7.00 pm, 19 June 2019	Parents' meeting
12 July 2019	Consultation Ends
15 July 2019	Collate responses for governing body
17 July 2019	Governing body to review responses from consultation
TBC	Additional staff meeting if required
TBC	Additional parent meeting if required