



# FIR BANK PRIMARY

*'Where everyone matters'*

Grasmere Road, Royton, Oldham, OL2 6SJ

Telephone: 0161 624 9577

Website: [www.firbank.oldham.sch.uk](http://www.firbank.oldham.sch.uk)

Email: [info@firbank.oldham.sch.uk](mailto:info@firbank.oldham.sch.uk)

---

Co-Head Teachers: Rachael McLaughlin & Rob Walker

8<sup>th</sup> October 2018

Dear Parent/Carer

## **Proposed Conversion to Academy Status**

As you may remember, Mrs Hazel MacKay (former Head Teacher) wrote to all parents in January 2017 regarding Fir Bank Primary School Governors applying to become an academy under the Academies Act 2010. The governors are proposing to join The Oak Trust for Inspirational learning and Leadership. In accordance with the requirements of the Academies Act 2010, the governing body is consulting on whether the school's academy conversion should take place. Further information about what becoming an academy means, and how to comment on the proposals, is set out below.

## **Will Fir Bank definitely become an Academy?**

The governing body has submitted an application to convert to academy status and is working towards a conversion in January 2019. However, the school is not obligated to become an academy until the contract between the academy trust and the Department for Education (known as the Funding Agreement) is signed.

The academy trust will not sign the Funding Agreement until parents and carers of pupils at the school, staff at the school, and pupils themselves have had the opportunity to comment on whether the school's academy conversion should take place. There will be a meeting for parents and community members on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> October 2018 at 4:30pm in the school hall, to learn more about the proposals to become an academy, or to comment on the proposals. We have also held meetings with staff, and will be keeping pupils informed throughout the process.

Any comments or representations which are made about the proposals will be considered by the academy trust before a decision is taken to sign the Funding Agreement. Details of how to provide comments and representations are set out below.

The academy trust will not sign the Funding Agreement unless they are content that conversion would be in the best interests of the school taking account of all of the legal and practical ramifications.

## **What is an academy?**

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 Fir Bank Primary School will become an academy as part of The Oak Trust for Inspirational Learning and Leadership. This means that the school will be part of an academy group comprising North Chadderton School and Thorp School (who are also currently consulting on a conversion to an academy to join this Trust).

### **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 Oak Trust 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, and in any event, the Oak Trust already deals with these matters for North Chadderton.

### **Will the admissions arrangements change?**

As a community school Fir Bank's admissions arrangements are set by the local authority, and the local authority also decides which pupils should be offered places at the school. As an academy, the Oak Trust will put in place admission arrangements, and decide which pupils should be offered places in accordance with those arrangements. The academy will still be bound by the national Admissions Code, and Admissions Appeals Code.

The current admission arrangements will remain in place for the time being for North Chadderton School. However, if the Oak Trust wish to change admission arrangements for the school in light of the conversion of Fir Bank and Thorp a consultation will be required to take place.

### **Will staff leave?**

If the school converts to an academy, all staff currently employed by the local authority to work at Fir Bank Primary 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 Fir Bank change?**

We do not intend to change Fir Bank Primary School 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. There is no intention to change uniform or name of the school. 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.

### **How can I find out more?**

A meeting will be held at the school on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> October at 4:30pm. 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:

[www.education.gov.uk/](http://www.education.gov.uk/)

If you can't find the answer to your question here, or on the DfE website, and cannot attend the meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> October, please email the Co-Head Teachers via [info@firbank.oldham.sch.uk](mailto:info@firbank.oldham.sch.uk) with 'Academy Order' as the subject, and they will try to assist.

### **How can I make representations?**

To respond to this consultation on whether the school's academy conversion should take place, representations can be made in writing to:

Mrs R McLaughlin or Mr R Walker, Co- Head Teachers  
Fir Bank Primary School  
Grasmere Road  
Royton  
OL2 6SJ

Or via email to: [info@firbank.oldham.sch.uk](mailto:info@firbank.oldham.sch.uk)

The closing date for representations to be made is 19<sup>th</sup> November 2018.

Kind Regards

*Rachael McLaughlin & Rob Walker*

Co – Head Teachers  
Fir Bank Primary School