

September 2015

Executive Principal: Mr A Shaw

Dear Parents/Carers

CONSULTATION ON CHURNET VIEW MIDDLE SCHOOL, LEEK HIGH SCHOOL AND WESTWOOD COLLEGE BECOMING ACADEMIES

Opportunity For The Most Successful Schools

The Governors of The Leek Federation have decided to consult with parents about their three schools becoming three academies under one Multi-Academy Trust. They believe that becoming an Academy would give each school the freedoms and flexibilities to continue to drive up standards. As schools that are “good” (last OFSTED Inspection), the schools’ applications have been pre-approved by the DfE. The Governors of The Leek Federation have now decided that it is in the best interests of each of the schools, their children and the local community, for each school to become an Academy. Each school will retain its status as a separate school, but overseeing the three schools would be the Multi-Academy Trust Governing Body that has overall responsibility for all of the schools in the Federation.

On **12 March 2015** the Governing Body of The Leek Federation voted to make an application to the Government for the schools to each become separate academies with one Multi-Academy Trust. This vote took place after discussion and consideration of how best to ensure the success of all our students. The schools have now received the Academy Orders granting permission to pursue Academy status.

The type of academy that the schools wish to become are ‘Converter Academies’. This is a category available only to the best schools, as judged by government inspectors. Schools must be considered by Ofsted to be ‘Outstanding’ or ‘Good’ to apply for this status.

Why Do We Want To Be Academies?

Put simply, we want to become academies in order to ensure that we deliver **even greater success** for our current and future students.

What Is An Academy?

An academy is essentially an Independent State School, which has freedom from Local Authority control and receives its funding directly from the government. As a result it has an increased income, which at a time of reduced income for schools is an important factor in determining the capacity of our schools to continue to improve at the same rate as we have done for the past few years.

The previous Coalition Government introduced a new type of Converter Academy which is designed to allow the most successful schools in the country to take greater control of their own affairs in order to raise standards even further. Because these schools are already successful they do not have a sponsor; they do not replace the Headteacher and the staff; they

Churnet View
Middle School

Leek High School

Westwood
College

do not need to remove their Governing Body; and they obviously do not have to transform the school.

These 'Converter Academies' are given greater freedoms and privileges to decide for themselves how best to provide success for their students.

This IS the type of academy that the schools of The Leek Federation are seeking to become.

What Are The Benefits Of Being An Academy?

- Academies have greater freedom to adapt the curriculum to suit the needs, progress rates and talents of their students.
- Academies are funded directly by the government. This means that they receive their total allocation of funds without the Local Authority taking a 'top-slice' to run central services.
- Direct funding would give our schools an increased income that can be invested in teaching and learning, and raising standards.
- Academies can set their own pay and conditions for staff. In The Leek Federation we would be able to ensure that our schools always offer rates of pay and conditions of service which at least match those available in other local schools. By doing this we can make sure that we attract and retain the highest quality staff; a key aspect of ensuring our progress.
- Academies are independent of Local Authority control. This means that we would be free to set our own priorities in the interests of our students.

Are There Any Disadvantages To Becoming An Academy?

We don't think so.

There are clear and significant benefits for the students of The Leek Federation and their families.

Academy status would not prevent us from continuing to play a full role within the Staffordshire family of schools. We would be obliged to support other schools so this would add to the partnership work we already do working with the schools in the Leek Education Partnership and other secondary schools in Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire.

The schools in The Leek Federation becoming academies would not take money away from other schools. Academies only receive the existing amount of money specifically allocated to them by central government. They do not get additional money from the Local Authority.

The Local Authority has an explicit responsibility to encourage the development of academies and we would continue to work closely with them and would continue to buy some services from them; Staffordshire County Council is supportive of schools that wish to convert to academy status.

How Will Becoming An Academy Affect Our Admissions Arrangements?

In the same way as maintained schools, all academies are required to adopt clear and fair admission arrangements in line with the admissions law and the School Admissions Code.

When a school converts to become an Academy, it will be the admission authority and is responsible for its own admission arrangements. This will mean little change for our schools as due to our foundation status we already are self-standing admission authorities. But for community schools and voluntary controlled schools, their Academy would need to manage its own admissions process. It will involve periodic consultation and the regular publication of the

Academies' admission arrangements. There will be no change to current admission arrangements for our schools.

Will the schools in The Leek Federation Change?

We want to introduce further improvements that will ensure that the last few years' progress is surpassed in future years. The schools cannot afford to be complacent because of our recent successes. We must deliver even more success for our current students if we are really to give the best possible service to them and their families.

Are We Certain To Become Academies?

No. We have applied to the DfE to become academies which they have initially supported.

We want to know the views of our students, their parents, our staff and our partners about this proposal, so that we can be sure it really is the right next step in the history of our schools.

How Can I Find Out More?

A meeting for parents and carers of our current students in all three schools will be held on **Wednesday, 14th October 2015 at 6.00pm at Leek High School**, and on **Thursday, 15th October 2015 at 6.00pm at Westwood College**.

There is also a wealth of information about Academies on the DfE website:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/academies>

If you cannot or are not eligible to attend the meetings on the above dates or you cannot find the answer to your question from the DfE website please email academy@leekfederation.org.uk and we will do our best to help.

How Can I Make Representations?

By writing/e-mailing your son/daughter's school or by attending the Parents' Consultation Meeting. Please note the closing date for representations is **Monday 02 November 2015 at 3.30pm**.

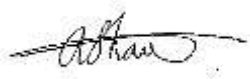
Representations can be made in writing to:

The Chair of Governing Body
The Leek Federation
c/o Westwood College
Westwood Park
LEEK
Staffs
ST13 8NP

Or by email to: academy@leekfederation.org.uk

We believe that this is a great opportunity for the children in our schools at present and in the future.

Yours sincerely



Andrew Shaw
Executive Principal