

The parents and members of the local community were invited to attend a virtual meeting held via Zoom on Thursday 28 January 2021 at 7:00 pm to provide an opportunity to learn more about the background to the consultation, details from the Oxford Diocesan Bucks Schools Trust (ODBST) on the academisation process and then provide opportunity at the end for questions from the attendees.

There were 23 attendees including the Interim Headteacher (Ms T Nowell); Chair of Governors (Mrs M Tebbot); Representatives from the ODBST (Mr D Cousins, School Improvement Manager and Mrs S Piesse, CEO) , Governors (D Redhouse, J Dean, M Cox, L Sparks, D Gibbins, G Sandeman, Rev S Lepp, L Stone, C Weaving), Hambleden Parish Council Representative (L Mann) and 10 Parents. The Clerk to the Governing Board, Mrs R Lawson, was in attendance as note taker.

Please note that these are not a verbatim account of the proceedings and should not be read as such.

	Item	Discussion
1.	Welcome and Introductions (M Tebbot)	<p>All those present were welcomed to the meeting, with the Interim Headteacher, the recently appointed Priest in Charge of the Hambleden Valley Parish and representatives from the Oxford Diocesan Bucks Schools Trust introduced.</p> <p>It was confirmed that this meeting is not being recorded.</p>
Frieth CE Combined School Governing Board Presentation		
2.	Background (M Tebbot)	<p>The purpose of this meeting is to provide background to the Governing Board's decision to apply to become an academy school with the Oxford Diocesan Bucks Schools Trust (ODBST) and give the opportunity to ask questions.</p> <p>The formal consultation period runs until 19 February 2021 and queries can be submitted via the School office (office@friethschool.co.uk) with more detailed background information available under Academy heading on the school's website (Welcome to Frieth CE Primary School (friethschool.co.uk)). The Board will consider all the responses and queries received.</p> <p><u>Summary:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The decision to join the ODBST is a matter of choice. • The initial reaction from the parent community, when the decision to become an academy was discussed over two years ago, was of concern as they associated conversion with failing schools. • When initial investigations commenced the majority of secondary schools were academies with very few primaries. Thus the Board had concerns the school's unique character and Foundation status would be lost as part of a multi-academy trust (MAT) with these schools. • Over the past few years the level and quality of support provided by Buckinghamshire Council and Buckinghamshire Learning Trust (that went into liquidation in March 2019) had declined. By this point the School was obtaining the majority of training and support from the Oxford Diocesan Board of Education (ODBE) • When the initial decision to join a Diocesan MAT the existing (and very successful) one was for schools mainly within Oxfordshire and was at capacity • The ODBE then decided to form a MAT specifically for schools within Buckinghamshire , that is now called the Oxford Diocesan Bucks Schools Trust (ODBST). Meetings with Headteachers, Chairs of Governors and Finance Officers within schools already part of the ODBST were held as part of the investigative stage. • One of the objectives of the Interim Headteacher is to oversee the move to academy status, as they have previous experience of this process.

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ODBST in principle support the application by the Frieth CE Combined School Governing Board to join • The Board and School believe that joining the ODBST will be to the benefit of the continued improvement and viability of the school whilst permitting to retain its character and ethos. • There will be very little visible difference to the pupils and parents. The greater change would be 'behind the scenes' with quality support and training for the staff and governors. there will also be support for financial management, HR, and premises management. <p>It was reiterated that the Board's decision to join the ODBST is a choice to support the continued improvement of the School and continues its history which started more than 150 years ago and will take it forward strongly to the future.</p>
Oxford Diocesan Bucks Schools Trust (ODBST) Presentation		
3.	information about the ODBST	<p>The ODBST believe that Frieth CE Combined School would be a welcome addition to the ODBST MAT. Please refer to the Power Point shared at the meeting for fuller details of the work of the Trust including background of the history of the current academy initiative and its structure.</p> <p><u>Summary:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ODBST's overarching aim is to provide pupils with the best possible start in life through quality education so they make good life choices. • The school will retain its unique characteristics with the Trust providing a framework of challenge and support to allow it to move from strength to strength. • This consultation meeting is to gather the views of parents and the community but it is the governing board who will make the final decision to join the Trust. • The MAT has a reputation for developing and supporting staff and working collaboratively with the schools. • The reduction in support from the local authority has made headteachers feel isolated, with larger schools becoming more internally focussed and smaller ones finding it harder to engage with them. For example, the local authority provides the statutory minimum of support which means that headteachers may receive one catch up call each year but the ODBST provide 6 on-site visits per year. • Initially, the academy schools were those schools which were failing and required intervention to improve. However, since 2010 the Department of Education rescinded the need for a school to be 'failing' thus many outstanding/good schools made the decision to convert. • It is compulsory that any school converting to academy status must join a multi- academy trust. • The Oxford Diocesan Board of Education (ODBE) is responsible for 285 schools in a very disparate geographical area it provides a quality school improvement service. • The ODBST was created in 2017 , just for schools in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes , and currently has 11 schools with more schools in the pipeline to join. The schools do not have to be a church school to join the Trust. • The relationship between the ODBE and ODBST was explained. • Schools that join the Trust are allowed to keep their own unique characteristics which fit the local community's needs. • Ofsted still visit the schools and there is movement towards overall inspection of MATs. • Please refer to the Power Point for details of the centralised services that cover HR, Finance, Premises, Training and CPD, Procurement, Admissions, School Improvement and Governor Support

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academy status does not necessarily mean more money but provides better stability and quality support than currently available via the local authority. The ODBST take a top-slice of the per pupil funding received from the Department of Education for centralised services but then does not charge for staff and governor training. There will be no change to school name, uniform, and school catchment.
4.	Academisation process	<p><u>Decision making process:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Governing Board makes the decision, to register an interest with the Department of Education to join the ODBST. The trustees of the ODBST agree to the School joining. Stakeholders are consulted. The Governing Board resolves at a board meeting to join the Trust. Extensive due diligence is conducted by both parties. The initial findings are positive. The Regional Schools Commissioners office via the Headteacher's Board approves the academy order. This releases the £25K conversion grant paid directly to the ODBST. Once the legal and due diligence work is completed the Secretary of State for Education then issues an Academy Order. The order date is the 'date of conversion'. Until this order is signed either party is able to withdraw.
Questions and Answers		
	Of the eleven schools in the Trust , can you give an example of what is the biggest contribution the ODBST has made?	<p>One school, in special measures, was directed to join the ODBST. In just 18 months the investment into the school has improved pupils' outcomes significantly and it is on the cusp being judged as 'Good' under the current Ofsted Framework.</p> <p>Additionally, the Trust provides a lot of support for headteachers via regular briefings; finance team support; HR support; CPD for staff and governor training.</p>
	How does moving to an academy fit with a child with an EHCP?	The funding remains the same and this SEND funding would be paid directly to the school. The local authority have, and will continue to have, a statutory duty for SEND provision.
	How much is left for working capital development after the 6% top slice is taken by the ODBST ?	<p>The top-slice is for the provision of central services. This central pot of funding covers trust staff salaries, school improvement , CPD, additional support for schools in difficulty. A local authority maintained school would need to pay for these services and the ODBST uses part of this recharge to cover for example the costs of HR, Financial support at no additional charge. The funding for capital works is separate and the ODBST is now in receipt of funding directly from the Department of Education called the SCA Grant which all schools in the Trust benefit from in capital works..</p> <p>The funding received for Pupil Premium and PE Sports Premium grant is paid directly to the school.</p>
	Does being part of a trust make it harder/easier to recruit a Headteacher?	The support provided by the ODBST over the past few weeks has been fantastic and already an informal 'WhatsApp 'group for Chairs of Governors has been very useful . Headteachers would also be reassured to know that they could receive consistent and quality support. There is also the issue of recruitment in an area with a high cost of living (high house prices) without London or Fringe weighting to the salary and mixed-age teaching can impact on recruitment. The support from the MAT has been a positive in recent recruitment rounds and being an academy was not a barrier. Additionally, there are so many academy trust schools across the county that this is not perceived to be a obstacle to recruitment. Currently, the Board have concerns about recruitment of a substantive

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	<p>Headteacher when it is not possible the candidates to interact face to face with pupils and staff. This is especially important in a small school that is integral to the local community.</p> <p>The ODBST have experienced personnel who are able to provide support during the recruitment process. The Headteacher would also have benefit from access to inter school peer: peer support which should make them feel protected and supported not vulnerable and isolated.</p>
Do staff provide cover between schools in the trust ?	The Trust does not hold a bank of staff to provide supply cover as this is done a school by school basis. However, the Trust is able to use staff skills and expertise to provide specialist support and challenge.
What is the proposed timeline ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Headteacher's Board are due to meet in March and provided the ODBST is happy then the academy order will be issued. • The due diligence process is due to take between four to five months to complete. • Thus the aim would be for conversion towards the end of summer term (June or July 2021)
How many schools does the ODBST think it can take before it reaches capacity?	Around twenty five schools, though there is less 'urgency' within Buckinghamshire for schools to convert to academy status. The attraction for many is the ODBST's ethos to allow schools to retain independent with decision making remaining local.
Can you give examples where trusts are not run well ?	The main issues are where a trust's central team does not fully understand the local context of the schools within a trust so decisions are not made to ensure the pupils in the school flourish. The decision making is not devolved to local governing boards and there is more concern about the 'reputation of the school. Often there is a lack of quality assurance with schools working in 'silos' rather than collectively. These trusts usually don't have in-house school improvement services and run like a 'businesses. The trusts that perform well have a good understanding of the school's context while allowing schools local decision making control.
Are staff happy with proposals ?	Staff are happy with the proposal and have also been informed by the Board and ODBST of the academy conversion proposal. Staff will provide their feedback directly to the Interim Headteacher and be party to the TUPE (Transfer of Undertaking Protection of Employment) process.
Knowing what you know about the school, why is joining the ODBST is the best thing for the school ?	It is very hard for small schools, such as Frieth Ce Combined, to sustain themselves . Joining the Trust will help with access to expertise, training for staff, liaison with staff in other schools and quality HR/ Financial services support.
Summary and Thanks	
<p>Thanks were extended to all who attend and their contributions to the meeting's discussions. The formal consultation period runs until 19 February 2021 and queries can be submitted via the School office (office@friethschool.co.uk) with detailed background information available under Academy heading on the school's website (Welcome to Frieth CE Primary School (friethschool.co.uk)). These will be considered at the Governing Board meeting to be held on 1 March 2021.</p> <p>Anyone interested in joining the Governing Board and influence the move into the academy trust please do not hesitate to contact the Headteacher or the Governing Board</p>	