



THE PRIORY SCHOOL

D O R K I N G

Headteacher: Mrs J Trimnell

21 January 2022

Proposal to become an academy and join Enlighten Learning Trust

The Governing Body of The Priory School is proposing that our school becomes an academy in partnership with the Enlighten Learning Trust (ELT). Our Governing Body welcomes your questions and comments about this proposal to help inform its final decision. This period of consultation and dialogue will commence on Monday 24 January 2022 and end on Friday 25 February 2021.

What is an Academy?

An academy is a state school, funded directly by central government, and joining an academy is known as 'academisation'. When a school such as ours becomes an academy, they gain some additional freedoms and responsibilities. Whilst historically, some schools have been forced to join academies to address low standards of learning and teaching, The Priory School, by contrast, is a consistently high achieving school and this proposal is driven not by the Local Authority or government but by the Governing Body's considered belief that students, teachers and support staff will benefit from collaboration with carefully selected schools which share our values and vision. Further details can be found in our 'Frequently Asked Questions' [here](#).

Successful Collaboration

Since September 2020 our school has been collaborating with other schools within the ELT. As part of this collaboration, we have benefited from Heads of Department sharing good practice and members of the Senior Leadership Team developing strategies to improve the progress of vulnerable groups and most recently, sharing ideas with staff in similar roles to enhance their own CPD. In turn, this has enabled our own teachers to develop their teaching and leadership, which ultimately aids the successful development for many of our students. It has also empowered them to encourage and motivate other members of staff within the school. Throughout this period, we have been able to benefit from this collaboration with ELT, whilst retaining our individual distinctiveness within the community, which remains of paramount importance to our school.

To start this consultation process, we would briefly summarise the reasons why we believe further collaboration will serve our students and staff so well.

Why now?

We appreciate that the unprecedented uncertainties generated by the COVID-19 Pandemic may make any contemplation of change particularly challenging. None-the-less, our

resilience as a school community over the last 18 months has given us further reason to believe that it is through excellent team work that we move forwards and flourish.

Why join a Multi-Academy Trust?

We believe that collaboration with the schools within ELT will further improve outcomes for students and staff. It will do this through drawing on a wide bank of expertise; creating further economies of scale and sharing resources to give our schools an even stronger, more resilient structure. This will in turn ensure that every student's learning opportunities are maximised and that every member of staff has encouragement to grow and to lead.

Why become an Academy and not remain as a Local Authority School?

Seeking the best for all students is our responsibility as a Christian school and our Diocese, the Diocese of Guildford, is strongly encouraging its schools to academize for the future protection of its distinctively inclusive and values-driven education. The Governing Body passionately believes that, as a school rooted in Christian values, we have a moral duty to strive for a level of educational excellence which reaches beyond our own walls. Through formal partnership with other, like-minded schools, we can ensure that an even greater number of students flourish and experience life in all its fullness.

Why ELT and not another Trust?

We are happy to say that the [Enlighten Learning Trust](#) shares our vision and our values completely. It feels like a natural partner for The Priory School on account of its inclusive yet distinctly Christian ethos and its aspirational commitment to the belief that every student is deserving of a nurturing, holistic and empowering education. Like us, it aims to bring about positive social change by equipping students for a rapidly changing world. By joining ELT, we would not be 'taken over' instead we would become an integral part of a 'family of schools' and our precious and distinctive vision and values will continue to be celebrated.

Does this mean that The Priory School will lose out if it is no longer run by the Local Authority?

There is a national move towards academy status for all schools and as a result some Local Authorities are vastly reducing and withdrawing support for education, meaning that the system of education in this country is increasingly school-led. As a consequence, we believe that schools in Surrey are becoming increasingly isolated, often with little support, a greater sense of competition and a disproportionately large amount of time spent by leaders on tasks which would have previously been undertaken by the Local Authority. This all culminates in less time to focus on excellent teaching and learning. Academisation seeks to address this imbalance, re-establishing student outcomes as the top priority of partnered schools. Within Surrey, 42 secondary schools are now academies and only 11 remain part of the Local Authority (as at 1 September 2020). Over half of children nationally are now educated in academy schools. The government's vision is for every school to be part of a family of schools in strong academy trusts.

Summary

In summary, the Governing Body believes that both the students and teachers will benefit from collaboration with ELT through shared vision and values, further strengthening our resilience and the opportunities of our staff, all centred around maximising the outcomes of our children through educational excellence.

What form will our consultation take?

Our parents, staff and the Diocese are being consulted as part of this process and we have put into place the following to enable this consultation to be as comprehensive as we can make it.

We want to listen to your views and to answer any outstanding questions you may have. As a result we intend to offer the following Covid-secure drop-in session with a Governor and a member of the Leadership Team to answer any questions you may have. These can be booked online [here](#).

- 8 February 2022, 4:00pm - 5:00pm (in the Drama Studio)
- 22 February 2022, 4:00pm – 5:00pm (in the Drama Studio)

In addition you are all invited to complete a questionnaire which will be emailed to all within The Priory School community on Friday 28 January 2022 and we encourage you to respond with any questions you may have by Friday 18th February 2022. Alternatively, you can email the school at any time using the email academy@priorycofe.com to ask questions relating to this consultation.

Mike Boddington (CEO of Enlighten Learning Trust) will also be conducting two meetings to answer questions on Thursday 3 February (**Virtually**) from 5pm to 5:30pm or Monday 21 February (**At The Priory School**) 5:00pm to 5:30pm. If you would like to attend one of these meetings, please book a place [here](#) to register your attendance. If you wish to attend a virtual meeting then a link will be emailed to you closer to the time.

Finally, our FAQ document is live and will be updated regularly to capture any additional questions and concerns raised.

Consultation closes on Friday 25 February 2022.

What happens next?

Our Full Governing Body will consider all feedback received prior to making a final decision about becoming an academy and partnering with ELT. Should the proposal proceed, it is anticipated that The Priory School would convert to academy status on or after 1 September 2022. Should the proposal not proceed, The Priory School will remain a maintained school. For more information about our proposed conversion please visit our Academy Consultation section of our school web page.

Rev'd Peter Nevins
Chair of Governors



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