



**COUNTESS
GYTHA
PRIMARY
SCHOOL**

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COUNTESS GYTHA PRIMARY SCHOOL CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

Should Countess Gytha Primary School become an academy?

The Governing Body believes that becoming an academy may be in the best interests of the school, its pupils and the local community. After consideration of the other possible school links within the locality, and after research and discussion, the Governing Body feel that joining the Preston Primary Academy Trust is the preferred option. This is because of the links that over the last year have already been formed with Preston Primary Academy Trust.

Academies are state funded schools that are independent of Local Authority control – in other words, the funding comes from Central Government straight to the School and the pupils, without first going via the Local Authority. Academies are also all-ability, non-selective, non-fee paying schools in the same way that Countess Gytha Primary School is now.

So that you can find out more about the academies programme, the reasons why the Governing Body is considering a change in status and some of the common concerns about academies, governors have developed this Consultation Document. We hope it will help you to formulate your own view on this important issue.

If you need any help in understanding this document, please contact the school office where we will make arrangements to help you.

The consultation process – HOW TO HAVE YOUR SAY

The consultation process, agreed by the Governing Body, has been designed to gather as wide a range of views as possible. It is important you have your say, as your views will influence:

- the Governing Body's decision as to whether or not Countess Gytha Primary School joins Preston Primary Academy trust;

Who we will consult with?

The Governing Body will seek the views of:

- Parents and carers who currently have children at the school
- Staff and their trade union representatives
- Somerset County Council (the Local Authority that currently maintains Countess Gytha Primary)
- Local councillors
- Any other interested parties

Countess Gytha Primary School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young persons. We will ensure that the highest priority is given to following guidance and regulations to safeguard children and young people. The school expects all staff and all visitors to fulfil this expectation.

How can I share my views?

Governors are happy to receive correspondence in any form.

- Emails should be addressed to office@countessgytha.somerset.sch.uk. Please place "Private and Confidential - Academy Proposal" in the subject line.
- Letters should be marked "Private and Confidential - Academy Proposal" and handed in to the school office, so they can be quickly forwarded on. All correspondence will be acknowledged unless, of course, it is anonymous.

In addition, a drop in session for parents and carers will be held at the school on Tuesday, 1 May 2018 from 3.30pm.

This will be an opportunity to:

- ask questions and / or raise concerns
- share your views on the proposal.

Governors will also be holding a meeting with staff and their union representatives.

Consultation documentation will be posted on the school website: www.countessgythaprimary.co.uk then look under News/Academy Status.

How long will the consultation period last and when will the final decision be taken on whether or not to become an academy?

The consultation period begins on Friday 13th April at 5.00 pm and will last for four weeks, closing at 5pm on Friday 11th May 2018. Having considered all matters brought to the attention of governors during the consultation process, the Governing Body will reconvene on 17th of May 2018 to make a final decision on whether or not Countess Gytha Primary School should join with Preston Primary Academy Trust. If the decision is taken to proceed with the conversion process, governors will work to a conversion date of 1st September 2018.

Main reasons for the Governing Body's proposal

The Governing Body's primary function is to ensure that Countess Gytha Primary School delivers the best possible education for its pupils and their families. Governors also take very seriously, their responsibility to serve the local community. After much information gathering, thought and discussion, governors now believe the academies programme may offer a number of significant benefits, which could support the school's drive for continuous improvement. These include:

Freedoms

Becoming part of an academy would allow our school leaders greater freedom to innovate. For example, free from the requirement to follow the National Curriculum, the school would be empowered to continue to develop a dynamic curriculum personalised to meet the need of children who attend the school. Being part of an academy, we could implement all or part of the National Curriculum, in direct response to the needs and interests of pupils and the community the school serves.

Greater flexibility to purchase services and drive efficiencies

As part of an academy, Countess Gytha Primary School would receive resources previously retained by the LA to run its services – about 10 % of its overall budget. Although the school would still need to purchase a number of these services, governors would welcome the freedom to "shop around" to achieve best value; this may involve working in partnership with other schools in order to achieve efficiencies of scale.

Any savings arising from procuring services more efficiently will be re-invested in resources that directly benefit the pupils of the school.

What is an Academy?

Academies are publicly funded independent schools, free from local authority control. Academies have an Academy Trust which is responsible for the land and assets of the academy.

What is the role of the Academy Trust?

An Academy Trust is a charitable company responsible for the running of the academy and has control over the land and other assets. It has a strategic role in running the academy, but delegates day-to-day management of the school to the governors.

What freedoms do Academies enjoy?

Academies can benefit from greater freedoms to help the school innovate and raise standards. These freedoms include:

- freedom from LA control;
- financial freedom (direct funding from central government);
- ability to set own pay and conditions for staff;
- freedoms around the delivery of the curriculum;
- ability to change the lengths of terms and school days;
- the academy becomes its own admissions authority.

What are the financial implications for Countess Gytha Primary School?

Academies will receive the same level of per-pupil funding as they would receive from the local authority as a maintained or foundation school. They also receive funding to meet their additional responsibilities that are no longer provided for them by the local authority. This means that we would receive the full amount of funding available to the school without any being 'top sliced' by the local authority; currently Somerset County Council takes around 10% of funding given to the school to run its education services. As an academy the school would receive the full amount of funding and would have the freedom to choose which services to buy back from the LA or whether to procure elsewhere.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Do we intend to change staff pay and conditions?

There would be no change to staff terms and conditions. All existing staff will be covered by TUPE - Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) regulations. There are currently no plans to change the school's staffing structure, and should this need to be considered in the future, a consultation would be held, in the same way as would happen at present.

Do we intend to change the school curriculum?

Academies have greater legal freedom to develop their own curriculum and move beyond the National Curriculum. At Countess Gytha Primary School, we are constantly seeking to improve so that it meets the needs of all our students. This will continue if we join an academy.

Do we intend to alter the length of terms or school days?

At this stage, we have no intention of changing either the length of the school day or the length or timings of school terms.

Do we intend to alter the Admissions Policy?

At present we intend to continue using the County Guidelines.

Will the name of the school change?

There is no requirement to change the name of the school or to incorporate the word 'academy'.

What happens about exclusions?

Academies must provide funding for full-time, off site education from the sixth day of a fixed term exclusion. This is currently the case for all maintained schools and will not change if we convert to an academy.

How will converting to an academy affect SEN support?

Our excellent SEN provision will continue, with students being supported throughout the school. Academy status will not affect the admission of students who nominate Countess Gytha Primary School on their Statement of Special Educational Needs.

What changes will there be on a day to day basis?

There will be no change to the way the school is run on a daily basis.