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Proposed Conversion to Academy Status

The Governing Body of Coppice Performing Arts School has applied to become an Academy, joining the Central Learning Partnership Trust multi academy trust, under the Academies Act 2010. The governing body is now 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 Coppice Performing Arts School definitely become an Academy?

The Governing Body has submitted an application to convert to Academy status and is working towards a conversion in September 2017. 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 Governing Body has not even begun to negotiate the Funding Agreement with the DfE yet.

The Governing Body will not agree to sign the Funding Agreement until parents and carers of students at the school [and in years 5 and 6 of our feeder primary schools,] staff at the school, and pupils themselves have had the opportunity to comment on whether the conversion should take place. We have written to all parents and carers and have also invited them to comment on the proposals.

We have also held meetings with staff, and will be keeping students informed throughout the process. Any comments or representations that are made about the proposals will be considered by the Governing Body before a decision is taken to sign the Funding Agreement. Details of how to provide comments and representations are set out below.

The Governing Body will not agree to 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.

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 control more of their 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 is appropriate for their students;
- Academies have more freedom to undertake innovative projects** – Academies are charitable 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?

As an Academy, we 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.

Will the admissions arrangements change?

As a community school Coppice Performing Arts School's admissions arrangements are set by the Local Authority, and the Local Authority also decides which students should be offered places at the school. As an Academy, we will be in a position to put in place our own admission arrangements, and decide which students 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. If the Academy wanted to change its admission arrangements consultation would be required.

Will staff leave?

If the school converts to an Academy, all staff currently employed by Coppice 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 Coppice change?

We do not intend to change Coppice except in ways which we think will improve the school even more. For students, it is unlikely that they will see much change in their school lives. Coppice will retain its identity as a Performing Arts school as this specialism has been central to the ethos of our school for many years and we are rightfully proud of the talent that we nurture. Coppice will not be changing the name of the school and our uniform will not change. Examination courses will continue as currently offered and we will continue to review the curriculum to ensure national curriculum requirements and government identified education priorities are met.

How will Coppice benefit by jointing CLPT?

We believe that being part of a larger organisation, with local Good and Outstanding schools, will support our drive for school improvement and will offer our students greater opportunities. In the Sixth Form, we will be offering a joint curriculum with Heath Park and Moseley Park so that students from these partner schools can benefit from our specialist teaching and resources and Coppice students can have access to a wider A Level curriculum involving subjects that we are unable to currently deliver in house.

Working in partnership with Health Park and Moseley Park our teachers will be able to access a wide range of training to ensure that our students are taught with the most up to date curriculum and methods.

CLPT form part of the local Teaching School Alliance which trains and recruits new teachers; working in partnership Coppice will be able to benefit from access to the best calibre of newly trained entrants to the teaching profession.

We anticipate that the 3 secondary schools will develop events and experiences for students with a far wider reaching range of contributors than one single school can offer. This will be of particular help when providing careers information and guidance.

How can I find out more?

Further information about Academies can be found on the DfE website:

www.education.gov.uk/academies

Further details about Central Learning Partnership Trust can be found on their website:

www.centrallearning.co.uk

How can I make representations?

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

Chair of Governors Mr W Brisco c/o Coppice Performing Arts School

Or by email to: headteacher@coppice.wolverhampton.sch.uk

The closing date for representations to be made is Friday 10th March 2017.