

# Bassenthwaite Primary School

Bassenthwaite, Keswick, Cumbria, CA12 4QH.



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## CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

**Should Bassenthwaite Primary School become an academy?**

### **What are Academies?**

Academies are state funded schools 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 (assuming there is no selection presently), non-fee paying schools in the same way that Bassenthwaite Primary School is now.

The Department for Education (DfE) has offered strongly performing schools of all sizes in England and Wales the opportunity to join the new academies programme, either individually or in association with other schools. It says that becoming an academy would "give schools the freedoms and flexibilities to continue to drive up standards." This is in contrast to the perception of academies set up under the previous government, which were almost always replacements for schools which were deemed to be failing.

A commitment to convert is made at the point when the school signs the Finance Agreement. This is binding for a period of at least 7 years.

As a school recognised by Ofsted as good with outstanding features, Bassenthwaite Primary School is eligible to apply to convert to Academy status. At a meeting held on 21st September 2016, the Governors voted to begin the process leading to a formal application for Academy status. We then wrote to parents on 26th September 2016 to inform you of the process and we are currently at the consultation period to find out views of all our stakeholders.

Having carefully considered the issues, the Governing Body has decided to consult over whether becoming an academy is in the best overall interests of the school, its children and the local community. 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. Please be ensured that our primary concern in this process is to do what is best for the children at Bassenthwaite School, now and in the future. Any decisions we make will be made on that basis.

**The consultation process will last until Monday 21<sup>st</sup> November 2016. The Governing Body will r**

**econvene to make a final decision on whether or not to become an academy school.**



It has been organised under the topics that we think will be the most important factors in helping you to form your opinion. The document has been subdivided into the following sections:

1. The Consultation Process; how you can have your say.
2. Potential advantages of becoming an academy school.
3. Potential disadvantages of becoming an academy school.
4. Information about the academies programme, including:
  - Finance
  - Special Educational Needs (SEN)
  - Admissions and Term Dates
  - Governance
  - Building and Emergency Contingency Plans

### **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:

1. The Governing Body's decision as to whether or not Bassenthwaite Primary School becomes an academy.
2. How the academy will be set up should the decision be taken to convert.

### **Who we will consult with?**

The Governing Body will seek the views of:

- Pupils
- Parents/carers (and prospective parents)
- Staff and their union representatives
- Local primary schools (which have chosen to/not chosen to convert)
- Keswick School which has converted to Academy status
- The Local Authority
- Local community groups
- Other interested parties

### **How can I share my views?**

1. **By letter or email.** ia email to the Clerk of the Governing Body (Josephine PEEL [jmapsden@gmail.com](mailto:jmapsden@gmail.com));

- By letter to the Headteacher (Mrs Sara Royle) or the Chair of the Governing Body (Mr Brian Eaton) via school;

Headteacher – Mrs S Royle



· Via the “contact us” part of the school website

2. An **Open Academy Consultation Meeting** will be held at the school on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2016 at 7pm. This will be an opportunity to:

- Hear why the academy consultation process has been initiated;
- Ask questions and/or raise concerns;
- Share your views on the proposal.

### Potential advantages of becoming an academy

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

**Freedoms:** Becoming an academy could allow our school greater freedom to innovate. For example, free from the requirement to follow the National Curriculum, the school would be empowered to develop a dynamic curriculum designed to meet the needs of its own pupils, perhaps improving standards further. Academies can determine their own length of the school day, term and holiday dates.

**Greater flexibility to purchase services:** As an academy, Bassenthwaite primary School would receive some resources previously retained by the LA to run its services. Although the school would still need to purchase a number of services, it would give school the freedom to “shop around” to achieve best value. As an academy, Bassenthwaite Primary School would have the ability to set staff pay and conditions. The Governing Body is committed to attracting and retaining the highest quality of staff.

**Be proactive:** It is likely that a large number of schools will become academies over the coming years. Therefore, it may be in the school's interests to be proactive and shape the new academies programme to meet the needs of our school and local community.

**Alliances:** We would gain more freedom to form an alliance/federate with other schools to allow us to reduce costs.

### Potential disadvantages of becoming an academy school

As there are potential benefits to becoming an academy, there are also a number of potential disadvantages:

**Additional Costs:** Academies receive funding previously retained by the Local Authority. There will be a number of additional costs e.g. legal services, pensions, insurance. Critics of the



programme argue that these could be substantial and end up leaving the school worse off.

**Changes to staff conditions:** Academies have the freedom to adopt their own conditions of work for staff, and there is no guarantee that governors in the future will remain bound by national pay and conditions. Existing staff have protection under TUPE legislation.

**Increased risks:** The school will be directly responsible for its own future and will not have the LA to fall back on for support. The DfE would provide this assistance but on a more "arm's length" basis.

## Information about the Academies Programme

### Finance

#### **What happens now?**

Central Government, through the DfE provides Local Authorities (LA) with a sum of money each year known as the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The new funding formula which comes into effect from April 2013 requires all LAs to use this grant to:

- Fund individual school budgets (using 11 separate criteria: Basic Per Pupil amount, Lump sum per school, Deprivation, SEN, Rates, English as an additional language, Children Looked After, Mobility, PFI contracts, Higher Teacher costs (applicable to London fringe only) and Exceptional factors for Post 16 pupils).
- Provide a wide range of services for schools such as free school meals entitlement, education welfare services and special educational needs services, along with Health and Safety and legal issues.

After the LA has taken some of the money to fund these services, the remainder is given to the school to be spent on items such as staff salaries, computer equipment, books, heating, building maintenance and cleaning.

The DfE also provides a range of grants to LAs, some of which are for the LA to spend on services that support education and some of which are to be passed on to schools for them to decide how best to spend it. The LA funds the additional support required for children with Statements of Special Educational Need. Although Bassenthwaite School has full use of its premises, the LA owns all of the school's buildings. The money paid to the school is accounted for in a set of accounts prepared by office staff. A special committee of the Governing Body, called the Finance, Health and Safety and Buildings committee, is accountable for how the money is spent and for making sure that the accounts are accurate. The school's accounts can be inspected by the LA at any time.

#### **What would happen if Bassenthwaite Primary School were to become an academy?**

Academies are funded by the DfE through the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA). If Bassenthwaite was to become an Academy, the YPLA would provide it with a Grant made up of two components:

- Core funding which is exactly the same as the school would have received from the LA using its funding formula.
- Local Authority Central Spend Equivalent Grant (LACSEG) which would be Bassenthwaite's share of the money, based on pupil numbers, which the LA currently spends centrally on those services that the academy would now be responsible for.

The LACSEG is the additional money that Bassenthwaite would receive in comparison to an LA maintained school. On receipt of this money, Bassenthwaite School would need to decide how and where to buy the services that it needs and which are currently supplied by the LA. The school may be able to get those services less expensively than the LA currently charges, or it may have to pay more for them. Because the school would be buying services directly, the quality of the services it receives could improve.

The LA would no longer have the right to inspect the school's accounts at any time. Instead, the school would need to have its accounts audited by a firm of accountants at least

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yearly. Also, the school buildings and equipment would be owned by a special type of charity called a trust. A trust is described in the Governance section of this document.

### Special Educational Needs (SEN)

#### **What happens now?**

The LA has responsibility for assessing pupils and maintaining their Statements of SEN. The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) of the school has a responsibility to identify pupils that might need additional help and then work with a range of school staff and outside agencies to develop an individual education programme that will help to inform our teaching.

The LA has responsibility for pupils with Statements. They have to:

- Ensure that pupils are appropriately assessed and statemented where necessary;
- Fund any individually assigned SEN resources;
- Monitor arrangements for SEN pupils in academies;
- Conduct reviews of the Statements of children in academies at least annually.

The school has to comply with the Admissions Code and any SEN obligations set by the LA.

#### **What would happen if Bassenthwaite School were to become an academy?**

The school would still comply with the Admissions Code and any SEN obligations. The LA would retain responsibility for pupils **with Statements** in an academy on the same basis as for statemented pupils in maintained schools. They would still have to:

- Ensure that academy pupils are appropriately assessed and statemented where necessary;
- Consider parents' representations for an academy to be named on a Statement and act reasonably in considering those representations;
- Fund any individually assigned SEN resources;
- Monitor arrangements for SEN pupils in academies;
- Conduct reviews of the Statements of children in academies at least annually;
- Monitor SEN provision and educational psychology services in the school;
- Fund pupil referral units;
- Fund education out of schools;
- Fund education for excluded pupils.

If it converted into an academy, Bassenthwaite School would receive a share of funding for other provision in relation to SEN including: behaviour support services; therapies and other health related, education and welfare services.

There are obligations on schools which convert to academies; these are equivalent to those placed on maintained schools. In practical terms, this would require new academies to:

- Inform parents that their child has SEN and the special educational provision being made;
- An unqualified obligation to admit a child to the school if the school is named in the Statement;
- Appoint a qualified teacher as SEN coordinator (SENCO) and ensure that any new SENCO would undertake prescribed training.
- Academies are required by their funding agreements to consent to being named in a child's Statement unless they can demonstrate that admitting the child would be incompatible with the efficient education of other children and that there are no reasonable steps they could take, together with the LA, to prevent the incompatibility.

## Admissions and Term Dates

### **What happens now?**

Admissions criteria and catchment areas are set by the LA. The Cumbria criteria for allocating school places where there are more applicants than places available in a school are:

1. Children Looked After; Pupils with a Statement of Educational Need;
2. Children in catchment with siblings already in school;
3. Other in catchment children;
4. Children out of catchment with siblings in school with priority given to children living nearest to the school.

Term dates are set centrally by the LA. Schools have little or no discretion in changing those dates.

### **What would happen if Bassenthwaite School were to become an academy?**

If Bassenthwaite School were to become an academy it would continue to be bound by the National admissions code. The academy would have the power to set its own term dates if it chose to do so.

## Governance

Governance is about how the school operates and ensures a good quality of education for all its pupils, including those with special needs.

### **What happens now?**

School governors bring a range of experience and interests from many walks of life. They work closely with others to make good decisions about school aims and policies. Governors work as a team of volunteers who are responsible for making sure the school provides a good quality of education. They do this together with the headteacher, who is responsible for the day-to-day management of the school.

Every school has a Governing Body. It should include:

- Parents elected by other parents in the school;
- Staff governors elected by the teaching and non-teaching staff;
- Local Authority governors;
- Community governors appointed by other members of the Governing Body;
- The headteacher.

The number of governors may vary depending on the school's type or size. Governor appointments are for four years.

### **What would happen if Bassenthwaite Primary School were to become an academy?**

The Governing Body would be responsible for establishing a new Academy Trust. The Academy Trust (a charitable company limited by guarantee) would then enter into a funding agreement with the Secretary of State for the running of the academy. The Academy Trust has a strategic role in running the academy and would be responsible for appointing the governors to the Governing Body.

The key responsibilities are to:

- Ensure the quality of educational provision (as now);
- Challenge and monitor the performance of the school (as now);
- Have overall responsibility for the Academy Trust's finances and property;
- Employ staff directly.

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It would be for the members of the Governing Body of the school to decide and agree, in discussion with the Secretary of State, which among them would wish to be members of the Academy Trust and which of them would wish to be governors of the Academy Trust. It is possible to be both a member and a governor.

Academy governing bodies become the direct employers of staff, have direct health and safety responsibilities, are the school's admission authority and are responsible for ensuring that the school undergoes an external financial audit.

The DfE model Articles of Association have set a minimum of three governors, but not a maximum, appointed by the Academy Trust. The basic governance model envisioned by the DfE includes: one LA governor, a minimum of two elected parent governors and optional staff governors appointed by the Academy Trust. There may also be up to three co-opted governors appointed by the Governing Body.

The Secretary of State may also appoint additional governors in certain circumstances.

There is no requirement for academy schools to have an external sponsor e.g. from outside business, but this is a possibility. Where this is the case, the DfE expect the majority of governors to be appointed by the sponsor.

As the Academy Trust is a charitable company, the Governors would also be directors and charitable Trustees, and would therefore need to comply with obligations under company and charity law.

### **Building and Emergency Contingency Plans**

#### **What effects would Bassenthwaite School becoming an academy have on the building?**

The Academy Trust would enter into a lease agreement with the freeholder, the LA; this agreement is usually for 125 years.

#### **What happens if something happens to the building if we become an Academy?**

The annual fund would be paid by the Government to the Academy Trust. This would cover the normal running costs of the academy including: repairs; servicing and maintenance of buildings (including redecoration, heating, plumbing, lighting etc); maintenance of grounds (including boundary fences and walls); cleaning materials and contract cleaning; water and sewage; fuel and light (including fuel oil, solid and other fuel, electricity and gas); rents and rates; purchase, maintenance, repairs and replacement of furniture and fittings; and insurance.

#### **Would there be a specific insurance grant to cover for emergencies?**

Academies are required to cover insurance at specified minimum levels of cover. They are also eligible to seek an Earmarked Annual Grant from the YPLA (Young People's Learning Agency) for emergencies, in the same way that an LA can pay a maintained school a contingency payment.

#### **By becoming an Academy, would Bassenthwaite School building be more or less likely to be upgraded?**

In the same way that LAs have a capital building programme, so there will be an academies building programme. If Bassenthwaite School's need for capital investment was prioritised and met agreed criteria, it could be earmarked for investment.

#### **What if Bassenthwaite School decides not to convert to Academy Status?**

The school would remain under a control of the LA as at present and so the LA would determine the annual budget and be the employer of staff.

The LA has its own pressures to deal with: some of the uncertainties about the future associated with becoming an academy may also apply if we remain an LA school. During this year for instance, the LA has had to introduce charges for some services which were previously provided without charge.



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As you will see from the above, this is a complex issue and we shall appreciate your views.

Sent By: Mrs Sara Royle

Sent 26 Sep 2016 13:25

Dear Parents and Carers,

As you have probably read in last week's press, the Regional Schools Commissioner has approved Keswick School's application to form a multi-academy trust (MAT). Following lengthy discussions at our own governing body meetings and with Keswick School personnel, Bassenthwaite School and Ducklings Nursery Governing Body has started looking into the process of becoming part of the Keswick Multi Academy Trust. The Governing Body's priority is to enable the school to continue to provide an excellent education for our children while protecting the school's role at the heart of our community and retaining our unique qualities and strengths.

Collaborative working with Keswick School within a MAT offers many benefits for our children and staff; sharing best practice in teaching and learning, curriculum collaboration, extra-curricular opportunities, staff development, finance and human resources, legal services, school improvement structures and governance arrangements. Our school would retain its own name and structures, while benefiting from being part of the Trust.

Before it decides whether to submit an application to join the Keswick MAT, the Governing Body would like to hear your views on this proposal. At the same time further discussions with Keswick School will take place and legal and financial "due diligence" will commence.

There will also be the opportunity for parents and members of the community to meet and ask the Head teachers and Governors questions if they wish to in early November.

We invite your feedback, which can be submitted in the following ways:

- Via email to the Clerk of the Governing Body (Josephine PEEL [jmapsden@gmail.com](mailto:jmapsden@gmail.com));
- By letter to the Headteacher (Mrs Sara Royle) or the Chair of the Governing Body (Mr Brian Eaton) via school;
- Via the "contact us" part of the school website

The deadline for your comments, to allow the governors to review them, is 12 noon on **Monday 21<sup>st</sup> November**.

We will not let anything jeopardise the continuing success of Bassenthwaite School and Ducklings Nursery. We are a successful school because of the commitment of our staff, governors and our



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families; and also our ability to react appropriately to the changing educational landscape in order to achieve the very best outcomes for our children. We look forward to your responses to this exciting opportunity and will confirm any governing body decisions in due course.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Sara Royle (Headteacher)

Mr Brian Eaton (Chair of Governors)

*Parents and Stakeholders Academy consultation meeting*

Sent By: Mrs Sara Royle

Sent 20 Oct 2016 12:44

Dear Parents,

### **Multi Academy Conversion Consultation**

You may remember we wrote to you earlier this month explaining that governors had been looking into a multi trust academy status. At our full governing body meeting on 21st September 2016, Governors took the decision to initiate the consultation process on academy status.

This does not mean we will definitely become an academy but that we wish to seek views of all our community to inform our final decision.

We have already begun to discuss academy status with staff in school, and will also include pupils and members of the wider community in the consultation process.

We have arranged an information session for parents and carers and other stakeholders on Wednesday 2nd November 2016 at 6.00pm when you will be able to raise any questions directly with governors and the Headteacher, along with Keswick School Leadership team.

We hope for your support on the evening.

Yours sincerely,

Bassenthwaite School Governing Body



Headteacher – Mrs S Royle



Sent By: Mrs Sara Royle

Sent 10 Oct 2017 14:21

**Academy Order received for the conversion of Bassenthwaite Primary School and Ducklings Nursery to an academy as part of the Keswick Multi Academy Trust (MAT)**

Dear Parents,

The Governors are pleased to announce that our application to become an academy has been approved by the Regional Schools Commissioner for the North-West and that we have received our Academy Order. This means that we can now complete the process of joining the Keswick Multi Academy Trust over the next few months.

If all goes to plan our conversion date will be 1<sup>st</sup> January 2018. We look forward to this exciting new phase for Bassenthwaite Primary School and Ducklings Nursery. However, the school is not obliged to become an academy until the contract between the academy trust and the Department for Education (known as the Funding Agreement) is signed. The academy trust will not 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.

We do not intend to change Bassenthwaite School and Ducklings Nursery except in ways which we think will improve the school even more. For children, it is unlikely that they will see much, if any, change in their day to day school lives. Academies do have the power to vary their curriculum and vary the length of the school day, however, it is not intended to take any such steps at this stage and we would engage with parents/carers, staff and children if we did ever intend to make such changes in the future.

If you have any questions about the process to date, please do not hesitate in contacting myself or one of the governing body.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Sara Royle