



**RICHARD WAKEFIELD C.E.(VC)
PRIMARY SCHOOL**
HEADTEACHER
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Dear Parents and Carers

Academy Conversion Consultation Outcome

Following on from consultation, the Governing Body of Richard Wakefield C.E. (VC) Primary have decided to convert to an Academy and join The de Ferrers Trust. We estimate that this change will come into effect on the 1st February 2018.

Reaching this point has been a long and sometimes difficult process. As governors, we have given potential issues careful thought and discussion, sharing our fears, concerns and hopes for the future of the children within our school community.

We have taken into account all the views available to us, including those of staff, parents, The Diocese and other schools that we have been collaborating with. We would like to thank all that have taken the time to give us their input into this decision, which has been carefully considered. With regards to questions submitted from parents during consultation, these are now published, along with responses, on our website.

Throughout this decision process, our aim has and will continue to be to ensure that we are securing the best possible future for the children within our school community. We see this move not as revolutionary change, but as part of the continual evolution of our school. There will be new structures and systems, but for parents and pupils there will be surprisingly little change to the focus of education and learning.

We are excited to be taking this step. Whilst we know there will be challenges, we look forward to working ever more closely with the schools within The de Ferrers Trust and other schools in our wider community.

Yours sincerely

Simon Webster
Headteacher

Nicki Becker
Chair of Governors



1) Will Richard Wakefield remain a church school?

We will maintain our relationship with the Diocese and maintain our C of E school status. As a church school, there are specific Memorandum and Articles of Association which establish the Founding Members of the Trust. As the proposal is to join The de Ferrers Trust their articles of association will have to be changed to enable us to join which will provide protection for the Church School Ethos of Richard Wakefield. The Diocese have been fully consulted and are actively involved in our proposal to join The de Ferrers Trust. As part of this change, The de Ferrers Trust have appointed a member of the Diocese to their Board.

2) Will PTA funds remain dedicated to Richard Wakefield School or will they be shared amongst schools with The de Ferrers Trust?

Richard Wakefield PTA is a standalone charity, operating for the benefit of our school. If we were to join The de Ferrers Trust, our PTA will have full control of any funds raised and how those funds are spent. Therefore, funds will remain dedicated to Richard Wakefield Primary School.

3) Why is there not a ballot of parents?

In recent years, there has been a drive to create academies; schools that exist outside of the oversight of the Local Authority. Staffordshire County Council has told us it expects all schools to become academies in the next 18 months and that it will no longer have the capacity to support maintained schools. Therefore, the objective of this consultation is to enter a dialogue with parents regarding the risks and benefits of the proposal. As a governing body, we have been reviewing our potential options for the last 12-18 months, including joining The de Ferrers Trust, joining other multi academy trusts within the area, forming our own multi academy trust with other schools in the area and forming a Federation with other schools in the area. Becoming a standalone Academy is no longer an option supported by Government.

With this in mind, we are keen to hear views from parents on whether this is the correct multi academy trust for us to join, or whether we should be looking at alternatives such as a federation and why.

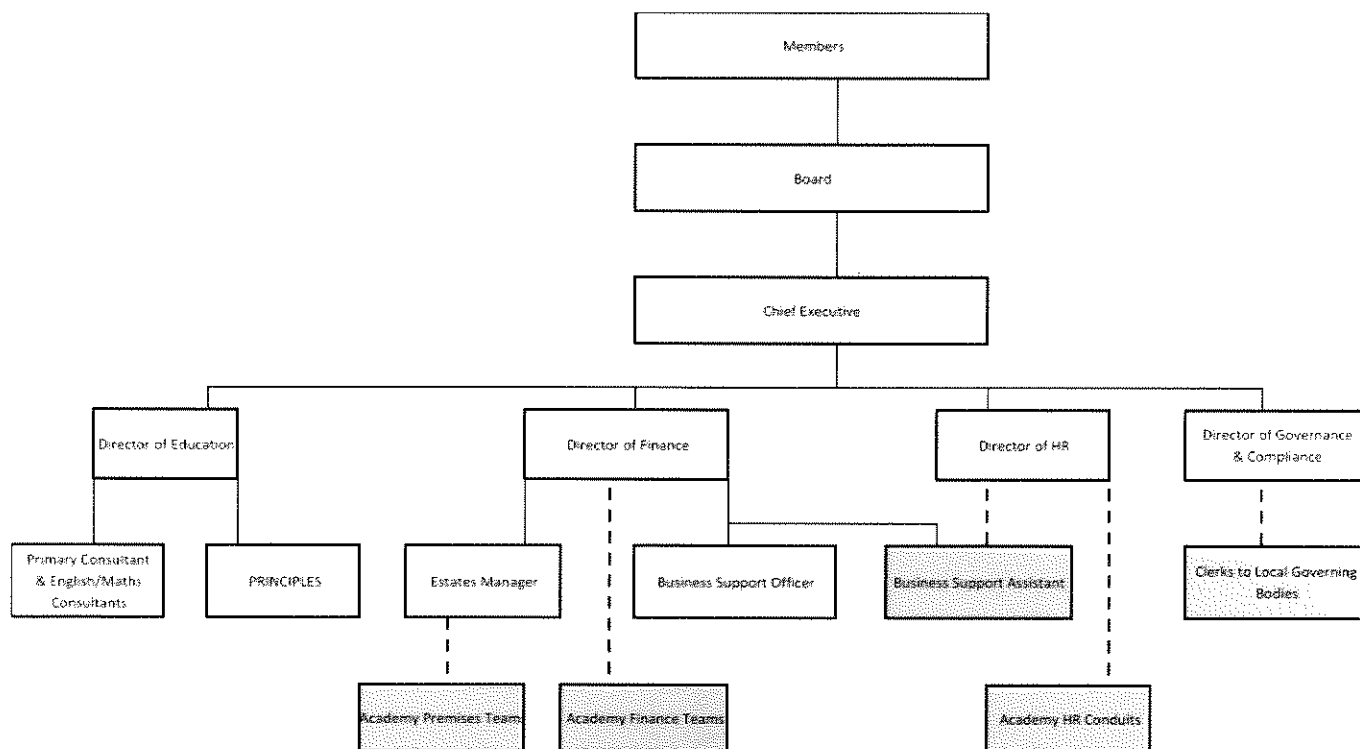
4) It seems that the decision to convert has already been made, and that the 'consultation' is more about gathering feedback in a relatively short timeframe, rather than a more extensive process of gathering evidence to examine whether this is the right step or not. I am concerned that the process is being rushed through, and believe that a longer, more rigorous consultation exercise should take place before any decision is made.

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Government advice is that following due diligence, a 30 day period of consultation is entered. Due diligence has been completed both for Richard Wakefield and The de Ferrers Trust. Both parties are satisfied that the proposal is of mutual benefit, but we are still very much open to views from parents for consideration before a final decision is taken by our governing body.

- 5) I am concerned about the loss of democratically elected oversight and accountability in becoming an academy in a MAT. There have been many concerns raised about the management and oversight of MATs in general.

The structure in place within The de Ferrers Trust is as follows:



A member of the Diocese sits on The Trust Board

Richard Wakefield would still have a governing body, which would be known as the Local Governing Board (LGB). If as an LGB we felt that The Trust was not acting appropriately (including with regards to pay and general management), putting the support for our school in jeopardy we would have the following routes for recourse:

- Complaint to the Board
- Complaint to the Diocese
- Complaint to Ofsted and the regulatory body, Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)

Ultimately, both The de Ferrers Trust and Richard Wakefield want to work together, in a relationship that benefits both. If the relationship was not found to be working, The de Ferrers Trust would support us in re-brokering to find a new education sponsor.

- 6) By joining The de Ferrers Trust, do we secure admission to The de Ferrers Academy for our children

Yes, we will continue to be a feeder school for The de Ferrers Academy.

7) There are several MAT's within the area. What is the rationale for choosing The de Ferrers Trust?

Governors considered many areas when deciding which MAT we feel is best suited to Richard Wakefield, notably:

- Values of a MAT and how they aligned to our own
- Secondary education for our children, and parent's preference of school for this
- Geography/catchment
- Support for us to maintain our relationship with the church
- How established each MAT was, and how much disruption would there be to our school in joining the MAT
- Skills within the MAT, for the benefit of both our students and the development of our staff
- Vision of each MAT regarding collaboration with other schools/MAT's in the area
- Performance of the MAT
- Financial security of the MAT, and funds available for development of our school

In considering all of the above, governors were unanimous in the view that The de Ferrers Trust was the right one for our school.