



Ashby Hill Top Primary School

An Academy School

Beaumont Avenue, Ashby de la Zouch, Leicestershire LE65 2NF

Executive Headteacher: Mrs Sylvie Newman

Telephone: 01530 415736

Fax: 01530 414283

email: office@ashbyhilltop.leics.sch.uk

website: www.ashbyhilltop.leics.sch.uk

Monday 25th April 2022

Dear Parents/Carers,

Consultation to join Symphony Learning Trust

You may well be aware that the Government is encouraging all schools to consider converting to Academy status and joining a Multi Academy Trust. Our school is already a Single Academy Trust, in that we are a single legal entity, with no other support from other schools/trusts. After careful consideration the School's Governing Body has decided that they wish to explore joining Symphony Learning Trust.

We are writing to consult with staff, parents, and our local community partners to determine whether the school should proceed with conversion and we would like to invite your views on the matter.

What is a Multi Academy Trust?

Ashby Hill Top is currently an academy, and in a Single Academy Trust. Symphony are a Multi Academy Trust, which means that the legal entity has the same structure, but there are more than one school within the trust. In Symphony's case, they have 9 primary schools, all within Leicestershire. The rules and regulations around how a MAT is managed is identical to those that we currently work within.

Why is this being considered?

Ashby Hill Top is already benefiting from being an academy, however, we are very conscious that the governmental direction, as evidenced in the recent White Paper, is very much about developing MATs of a sustainable size. We recognise the challenges that Single Academies (and maintained schools) have in terms of accessing great school improvement, and the pressures of budgets. Joining a successful MAT allows our school leadership to benefit from a team of dedicated colleagues focussed on improving all of the schools in the trust, and realising some economies of scale through increased purchasing power, and sharing of costs across the whole trust.

What are the advantages for our school?

We know the team at Symphony very well- they already run two schools in Ashby, and this move will allow us to work closer together, for the benefit of the children in the town.

Symphony offer a dedicated focus on school improvement, with network groups of staff coming together across the breadth of the school to drive continuous improvements and sharing of best practice in how we work. We are excited to be able to access this extra level of development.

There are some specific challenges that we have with our buildings at the moment, that being part of a multi academy trust allows us to more easily be able to address. Symphony will be of a size where they are eligible for School Condition Allocation (SCA), which is a pot of money given to the trust every year to support investment in infrastructure. At present we have to submit bids to the government for any projects



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we want to do, and our kitchen and some of our classrooms are in need of improvement works. Symphony have indicated they would be very supportive of addressing our needs quickly.

Our ability to focus on children is improved by joining a MAT, as some of the back office / compliance elements of being an academy will be absorbed by the central team at Symphony. This means that we can get a greater level of consistency, as well as spend more of our time in school focussed on delivering for our children.

What are the disadvantages of joining a MAT?

We don't believe there are disadvantages to this proposal, but, recognise some of the concerns that people may have. Joining a trust would move the legal responsibility to the Board of Directors at Symphony, and we would have to follow the Scheme of Delegation. Symphony are committed to strong local governance, and our local governing body would remain, with significant delegated powers.

Will any changes to the School be made as a result of joining Symphony?

The school will retain its name, identity, values and the way we work. Day to day there will be very little that changes. The practical changes come in the extra support we are able to access, and the legal liabilities that the school currently has would reduce.

How to take part in the consultation process

At this stage we are not committing the School to join Symphony. We are consulting with everyone associated with our school before Governors meet again to make a final decision.

We would ask that you let us have your views by completing this short form:

https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=_SyeWIRZyk-s0rwntAwKNEtiACrOaVRDmixldhMJjdhURjNaVFNGMkZIWjFaQzNSQTY3RTMwUjdRNS4u

Please add your comments by 12.00pm on Friday 11th June. More information about Symphony is available at www.symphonylearningtrust.co.uk

There will be an open meeting for you to come and raise any queries you may have or make comments about this on Monday 16th May at 5.30pm in the school hall at Ashby Hill Top Primary School. If you are unable to make this meeting but would like to ask any questions or make any comments please either telephone and ask to speak to Sylvie Newman or email slt@ashbyhilltop.leics.sch.uk by 12.00pm on Monday 16th May.

The consultation will close on Friday 11th June. The Governors will meet after this date to consider how to proceed.

Yours sincerely,

Emma Turner/Tristan Marshall
Co-Chairs of Governors

Sylvie Newman
Headteacher