



# CLIFFE V.C. PRIMARY SCHOOL

MAIN STREET, CLIFFE, SELBY, NORTH YORKSHIRE, YO8 6NN

ADMIN @ [CLIFFE.N-YORKS.SCH.UK](mailto:CLIFFE.N-YORKS.SCH.UK)

01757 638426

15/04/2024

## Notice of intention to convert to Academy status

Dear Parents / Carers,

As you will be aware from our previous communications, the Governors at Cliffe VC Primary School have been involved for some time in information gathering and serious discussion around the future direction of the school. You will also no doubt be aware that there is a changing landscape in education, both nationally and throughout North Yorkshire. This process of investigation and debate has now led us to have taken a unanimous decision to apply for academy status and look to join Selby Educational Trust (SET).

This letter begins a period of consultation with all stakeholders, which will run from Monday the 15<sup>th</sup> of April until Friday the 24<sup>th</sup> of May 2024.

We strongly believe that SET has the vision and values to support us, and that joining their trust would benefit our pupils and staff enormously. The Trust was formed with a vision that fits well with our own aims and ethos. Their vision is that every child attending a SET academy receives a high-quality education, delivered locally, that allows them to maximise their potential, shapes their lives and by so doing helps transform the communities we serve. They value and celebrate the unique character of schools and have a strong desire to collaborate with other schools striving for excellence for all.

Importantly for us, SET share our belief that retaining four classes and therefore the size of our school is of huge benefit to our pupils. Conversely, NYC are set on a plan to reduce our number of classes and therefore the number of pupils we can cater for.

We carefully considered the direction of our school and believe that this will be enhanced by working in partnership with SET, and the support it will bring across all aspects of life at Cliffe. The decision to apply to join SET has been taken following in-depth discussions between the Trust, Governors, the Mary Waud Foundation and the wider staff team. We were impressed with how open their Chief Executive Officer, Ian Clennan, and other members of the Trust were, and how they listened and responded to our many questions. Visits to their schools and discussion with their staff and Governors also provided us with further confirmation and reassurances. The Governors are extremely confident that, from the many Trusts they have met with, SET best reflects our own values and beliefs and they value and will retain the individuality of Cliffe VC School.





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## **What is a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT)?**

Academies are state funded schools in England, which are directly funded by central government (specifically the Department for Education) and independent of direct funding and control by the Local Authority.

## **Why are we choosing to join an academy trust?**

As central government proceeds with the drive to ensure all schools become part of a multi-academy trust, they have restricted funding to local authorities; in effect, forcing schools to consider other options to remain viable and future proof.

As a relatively small school, Cliffe has been particularly vulnerable to funding cuts and ever rising costs. Despite a record intake into our Reception Class in 2023 and a similarly healthy number joining us this year, North Yorkshire Education have not given us the confidence we would hope for in regard to ensuring the future growth, budgetary certainty or security of the school. Indeed, should we choose to remain a North Yorkshire School going forward and not look to academise, then it seems certain (and North Yorkshire has suggested to us) that the school would reduce in size, from four classes to three. As a result, we feel not only would the quality of education offered be negatively impacted but also the future sustainability of the school be threatened. By joining SET, we are reassured that the current structure of the school can be maintained and our future growth encouraged.

As part of our initial investigations into a potential academisation, we have approached the Department for Education to seek their approval. Upon a thorough review of our pupil achievement, OFSTED standing and financial situation, the DfE have approved the change in principle and advised us to begin this formal consultation process. Our Governing Body will now canvas all stakeholders, taking into account comments and questions, before making a final decision on the future direction of the school.

We have already begun to form a relationship with Selby Educational Trust and can see the benefits of this in terms of support and a drive for educational excellence.

We want to be in control of which MAT we join and not be forced into a Trust which does not align with our values, such as a large, corporate MAT which believes 'one size fits all'. This, we feel, would have an adverse effect on all in our community. In joining SET, we will be part of a small group of schools, led by a CEO who has a background in primary education; this is important as all too many MATs are driven by a secondary school model and led by secondary school leaders. Whilst the Trust will grow, to be part of SET at this stage, is an exciting opportunity.





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## Why Selby Educational Trust?

There are many multi-academy trusts across the country which differ vastly. We did not want to choose a large MAT which has a corporate strategy and ethos. We want one which is primary school focused and driven by a fervent desire to collaborate. SET is a small trust, consisting of just 3 schools currently, these are:

Selby Community Primary School  
Carlton Primary School  
Strawberry Fields Primary School

Three schools with strong reputations and rated 'Good' by OFSTED. They are ambitious and driven in their mission to build better futures for the children in the trust schools. They also strive to support staff in their growth as professionals. This is something which is currently lacking, in a climate where central government are squeezing the budgets of local authorities. We want our staff to have access to high quality professional development to raise standards and opportunities for children. In SET, we know, having spoken with existing staff in the Trust, that they will have this. In addition, the staff at Cliffe will have the chance to grow by working with others beyond the Trust, due to the Trust's work with other schools.

There is no doubt that we will benefit from the enhanced expertise that being part of a bigger organisation will bring. We are excited about the prospect of working in collaboration with a group of like-minded professionals with children at the heart of every decision and a desire for improving opportunities for all.





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## Questions and Feedback

Governors are now entering this official consultation phase. We know that the debate around academies has been divided in recent times, and we would like to make sure that the entire school community has had an opportunity to ask questions about what academy status means for Cliffe VC School.

It is with this in minds we are sending you this email, along with the 'Frequently Asked Questions' and answers shown below. This same letter is also being sent to all other stakeholders involved in the school and the wider life of Cliffe village. This includes The Mary Waud Foundation, Cliffe Pre-School, local Secondary Schools, Cliffe Parish Council and our points of contact at North Yorkshire Council Education.

We would now like to invite you to send any questions, comments, or concerns you may have via email to [admin@cliffe.n-yorks.sch.uk](mailto:admin@cliffe.n-yorks.sch.uk) with the subject 'Academy Conversion' and we will aim to address them as quickly and thoroughly as we can. We ask that any questions are sent within 14 days of receipt of this letter, so that we can respond in time for you to be able to review our feedback before the 24th of May.

In due course, the Governors will publish a summary of these consultation questions and a response to any themes or concerns raised. Following this you will be informed of further steps in the consultation process as they occur.

Finally, we would like to thank you for your continued efforts in support of Cliffe VC Primary School. We are incredibly proud of the school we have built together, our pupils are a credit to you and we take delight in observing the progress they make here with us. We are, as ever, committed to providing the absolute best quality of education and care for all in our school family, and we believe that joining Selby Educational Trust will help us to do just that.

Yours Sincerely,

**Mary Lumley – Chair of Governors.**  
**On behalf of the Cliffe VC Governing Body.**





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## Converting to an Academy - Frequently Asked Questions

### **DAY TO DAY CHANGES:**

1. *When would Cliffe become an academy?*

It is hoped that our application will be approved in time for the new academic year and that we will convert to become an academy by September 2024.

2. *What changes will the pupils notice?*

As far as our pupils are aware it will be very much 'business as usual'. The move to academy status will not demand a change of staff, the school day will not alter, provision within school will not look any different to our pupils.

3. *Will timings of the school day change ?*

There will be no change to the start or end times of the school day. Equally, before and after school provision will continue to run as it currently does.

4. *What are the advantages of academy status?*

At Cliffe, we believe working together to ensure standards across the Trust are consistently high, is an exciting new proposition, which will allow us to further develop our school. We will continue to work actively with all local schools and current partners, ensuring the best of both worlds.

Selby Educational Trust has made it clear that academy status will not change the things that work well for our school. The government is clear that the greater freedoms enjoyed by academies are designed to allow schools to develop and build on individual strengths in response to the needs of the community. We feel that the additional freedoms and flexibilities would enable the Governors to better secure the long-term future of our school.

In addition to this, we believe that the formal partnership with Selby Educational Trust will have several additional benefits. This includes a more targeted approach to the long-term future, strengthening our local identity, pooling of resources which will improve teaching and management practice across the trust, as well as greater control of our finances to the benefit of all children attending schools within the trust.





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5. *Will a move to academy status mean a new name for the school?*

No, the school will continue to be called Cliffe VC Primary School. Please be assured that the character, ethos and values of our school would remain unchanged.

6. *Will we retain a Governing Body ?*

The Governing Body of our school will remain in place. To help strengthen and inform their expertise they will also work with other Governors and representatives from across the Trust schools.

7. *Will a move to academy status effect our relationship with the Mary Waud Foundation ?*

No, The Mary Waud Foundation's 300 year relationship with the school will not change. The land used by the school will continue to be held in their ownership and representatives from the Foundation will continue to sit on our Governing Body. Any funds donated by the Foundation, such as those that currently finance music lessons for all pupils, will continue to come directly to our school and not split between other SET schools.

8. *Why are we not joining a Trust with schools that are geographically closer ?*

Academy trusts are not always locality based and can have schools which cross borders; indeed, some MATs have schools which cross several counties. We feel it is more important to be part of a trust with like-minded schools, than schools which have the same postal district but a different ethos. Geographically, we are within reach of the other schools in SET and will look to work collectively across training days etc. In terms of vision, we are aligned, and this is crucial to the future success of our school. We are lucky to have a good relationship with the other schools in our immediate area, some of whom are part of different MATs, some are NYC schools and we expect this to continue.

9. *Will we have to change pupil uniform?*

No, we will keep our uniform. There will be no change.

10. *What will be the impact on our children with special educational needs?*

There will be no negative change to the level of support provided. All funding will continue to be allocated in the same way as now and will be provided by NYC. Cliffe School will continue to recognise that every child is different and unique and has the right to be included as a valued, respected, and equal member of our school family.







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11. *Will pupils' education be disrupted by a transition to academy status?*

No. If an academy is approved to go ahead, it will do so with minimal disruption to the staff and children. Most of the changes will take place behind the scenes, with support from a dedicated team from the Trust who have gone through this process before.

12. *If we move to being an academy, will this change what is taught?*

We will continue to offer the full range of National Curriculum subjects. OFSTED continue to inspect academies and their handbook for inspection is the same one as used in any other school.

13. *When would Cliffe become an academy?*

It is hoped that our application will be approved in time for the new academic year and that we will convert to become an academy by September 2024.

## SCHOOL FINANCES:

14. *How is an academy funded?*

Academies receive the same level of per-pupil funding as maintained schools, plus funding to meet additional responsibilities that are no longer provided for them by the local authority. However, academies can often access additional funding sources and make savings through 'collective bargaining' in a way other schools cannot. A percentage of our funding will be retained by Selby Educational Trust to provide services to the academy which we would previously have bought in from the local authority.

15. *Does this improve on current funding arrangements?*

Funding is available to cover the costs of the conversion process itself, which is provided by central government once the decision to convert has been approved.

Converting to an academy will not be to our detriment financially, indeed there may be the potential for some financial gain. The MAT board has access to capacity funding from the Department for Education as well opportunities to bid for capital funding on an annual basis.

However, any decision is not motivated by financial considerations alone but instead with thought to how budgetary changes will improve provision for our pupils.





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16. *Will money raised by the PTA be absorbed by the academy trust?*

No, any additional funds raised by the PTA through their events will remain solely with our school.

## WHAT WILL THIS MEAN FOR TEACHERS AND STAFF?

17. *Who will employ teachers and staff following conversion?*

At present, teachers and staff are employed by North Yorkshire Council. Following conversion, teachers and staff will be employed by Selby Educational Trust.

18. *What are the terms and conditions for staff?*

On conversion to academy status, teachers and staff employed by NYC will transfer with the same terms and conditions, via a formal TUPE (transfer of undertakings protection of employment) process.

19. *Does SET employ non-qualified teachers?*

All class groups of pupils will be registered to a qualified teacher, as is the case in schools currently.







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## STANDARDS AND EXPECTATIONS:

20. *Does Selby Educational Trust have the capacity to support our educational standards?*

SET has established its own school improvement capacity for those schools choosing to become an academy, which includes a lead for school improvement and regular use of education consultants.

Collectively, the team is experienced and qualified to support and challenge the school in data analysis, teaching, behaviour, safeguarding, pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development, special educational needs and disabilities, and leadership and management.

Indeed, SETs CEO, Ian Clennan, is an experienced headteacher, a qualified OFSTED Inspector and is regularly asked by NYC to support their schools.

Schools are far stronger when working collaboratively and the links our school staff will make with the other schools will allow them to use their expertise to benefit others and to benefit from the knowledge and expertise across the trust.

