



FRANCHE COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

**FORMAL CONSULTATION TO CONSIDER
CONVERSION TO AN ACADEMY SCHOOL
AND JOIN THE RIVERS CofE ACADEMY TRUST**

**CONSULTATION PERIOD:
COMMENCES – Tuesday 3rd FEBRUARY, 2026
ENDS – Tuesday 17th MARCH, 2026**

Franche Community Primary School



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Headteacher Mrs E. Dixon



Artsmark
Silver Award
Awarded by Arts
Council England



Tuesday 3rd February, 2026

Dear Colleagues

As you are aware from our previous correspondence the Governing Board and Senior Leaders have been exploring options for potential conversion to an Academy as part of an Academy Trust.

Having considered a number of different trusts the Governing Board have agreed to move to formal consultation to consider joining The Rivers CofE Academy Trust.

The Governing Board are considering conversion to further enhance the school and create new opportunities for staff, pupils and our wider community. Joining a Trust is not a decision taken lightly, but it does present many positive opportunities including;

- increased financial stability to protect the school in the current economic climate and challenges faced by the sector,
- the ability to access lower costs for some essential services and equipment by using combined purchasing.
- strong networking and collaboration opportunities for our staff,
- access to wider and increased professional development opportunities for staff,
- enhanced and effective Central Support Services (e.g., estates and facilities, HR, finance, IT),
- primary-age specific support within a large community of schools, and
- greater opportunities for enrichment for pupils and collaborative activities with other Trust schools.

This letter forms the start of our formal consultation process which will run from Tuesday 3rd February, 2026 to Tuesday 17th March 2026. This process will provide all stakeholders with an opportunity to find out more information about the preferred Trust, ask questions and share their views with us. Within this document we have enclosed a copy of our FAQs which will hopefully provide clarification on some of the questions you may have.

During this consultation period we will be holding staff, parent and community consultation meetings. These meetings will include a presentation from Matt Meckin, CEO of the Rivers CofE Academy Trust who will be joined by other senior members of the Trust. There will also be time for questions to be answered by both School and Trust staff.

It is incredibly important that all members of the community have a chance to share their thoughts and ask any questions, so we look forward to your valued contribution to our formal consultation process.

As always if you should have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the school.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs E Dixon
Headteacher

Mr M Hughes
Chair of Governors

Franche Community Primary School

Parent/Community Consultation Meetings



Wednesday 11th February, 2026



Session 1: 3:30 pm
Session 2: 5:30pm



Upper School Hall
Franche Community Primary School, Chestnut Grove, Kidderminster DY11 5QB
///simple.broker.palms



Have your say or submit a question:
Write to us at the address above, send us an email to
office@francheprimary.worcs.sch.uk
or click [HERE](#) [Franche Community Primary School Staff Conversion Meeting – Fill out form](#) to submit your question online.



Your feedback matters and we would encourage you to complete our Consultation Form to support the Governing Board with their decision making. Click [HERE](#) [Franche Community Primary School Academy Consultation Questionnaire – Fill out form](#) to complete the form, click [HERE](#) [Franche Community Primary School - Academy Consultation](#) to download the form from our website or a hard copy is available at the school office.



All questions and Consultation Forms must be completed and submitted by no later than noon on Tuesday 17th March, 2026.



Register to attend by clicking [HERE](#) [Franche Community Primary School Staff Conversion Meeting – Fill out form](#)

Franche Community Primary School

What is Academy Conversion?



What is an Academy?

An Academy is an independent state school, funded directly from central government rather than through a local authority. A charitable company limited by guarantee (the Academy Trust) is responsible for the Academy, and the Academy Trust signs the Funding Agreement (the contract) with the Secretary of State as part of the establishment of the academy.

Legislation requires that academies:

- offer a balanced and broadly based curriculum;
- provide education for pupils of different abilities; and
- provide education for pupils who are wholly or mainly drawn from the area in which the school is situated

How is an Academy different from an LA Maintained School?

An academy has several differences to an LA Maintained school, including:

- Admissions – The Trust Board is responsible for setting and implementing its admissions policy and for prioritising applications. An academy must continue to operate within the requirements of the national School Admissions Code in the same way as maintained schools, including full participation in the local coordinated admissions scheme administered by the local authority;
- Curriculum – an academy has to offer a broad and balanced curriculum for pupils of differing abilities, including Maths, English, and Science, but at the present time, does not have to follow the National Curriculum; the Funding Agreement requires that an academy teaches Religious Education;
- Employment – the Trust Board becomes the employer of school staff, rather than the local authority. Trustees also have freedom to set new terms and conditions for future staff;
- Funding – the academy receives its existing school budget and also its share of the funding that is retained by the local authority for maintained schools;
- Land and Buildings – the land and buildings of the school are leased to the Academy Trust for 125 years at a peppercorn rent from the Local Authority and the academy would be responsible for the land and buildings (and reliant on the Secretary of State for capital funding);
- Governance – The Academy Trust (which is a charitable company) would be responsible for all the schools within the trust. Local Advocates facilitate local governance, and support and challenge to the Headteacher and leadership team, including parents and staff. The Local Advocates would be formed from the current Governing Body in the first instance.

Some of these responsibilities are already held by Foundation and Voluntary-Aided Schools. Voluntary-Aided schools, for instance, are already

responsible for their admissions, own their land and buildings (often through a Diocese) and employ their staff directly.

Franche Community Primary School

Frequently Asked Questions



As Franche Community Primary School starts to consult and consider joining The Rivers CofE Academy Trust, we understand that staff may have questions about what this means for their position and the school. These FAQs aim to provide clear and reassuring information.

When might this happen?

The 1st October, 2026 is the provisional planned timeframe for conversion. However, before then there are lots of statutory things that need to happen, including checks, due diligence work and consultation before any 'joining' can be considered.

Will the school name change?

No. There are no plans to change the name of the school.

The Rivers CofE Trust has Church of England in its name because it began as a CofE Trust. We are a community school and will this have any implications for us as a school?

No. Rivers started as a CofE Trust because the founding school was a Church School. Rivers now has far more community schools than Church schools (twelve community schools like us and four Church schools). The trust it's proud of its history and diversity of schools, welcoming pupils, families and staff from all faiths and no faiths. There are no CofE expectations placed on us, but we will be able to gain from Rivers' Church schools' expertise if we do routine developmental work to the statutory National Curriculum subject, Religious Education.

Will there be any changes to the school uniform?

No. The school uniform will remain the same. There is no expectation for families to purchase new items, and there are no plans to change the current uniform.

Will our school lose its identity?

No. Franche Community Primary School will retain its name, ethos, and unique character. The Rivers CofE Academy Trust supports schools in maintaining their individuality while benefiting from being part of a wider collaborative community.

Will Franche have to change its values and vision?

No. The Rivers CofE Academy Trust wants schools to have a distinctiveness to serve their unique communities. Franche will continue to have a local vision that enables this to happen. The Trust has a shared mission ('An extraordinary education for every pupil') across all schools and a set of values that unites all pupils and staff. There are clear links between the mission, values and ethos of Rivers and Franche.

What difference will it make joining

The proposal is designed to secure long-term stability and open up

The Rivers CofE Academy Trust?

new opportunities for our school. By joining a primary, values-driven, local trust, Franche would continue to thrive while benefiting from greater support, resources and shared expertise. The proposal offers clear educational benefits for pupils and staff, including stronger collaboration, mutual support and an expanded range of high-quality professional development.

What are the benefits of joining The Rivers CofE Trust?

Joining a strong, primary Academy Trust offers multiple benefits, such as:

- Primary specific support within a large community of local and regional schools
- A wealth of collaborative and enrichment experiences for pupils Box car rally, Mathematics Championships, Art projects, Sports competitions
- Greater collaboration and shared best practice across schools for staff
- Primary-age specific support within a large community of local and regional schools
- Access to wider and increased professional development opportunities for staff
- Enhanced support services (e.g., estates and facilities, HR, finance, IT) enabling leaders and staff to have added capacity and an even greater focus on Teaching and Learning.
- Increase in inclusion support
- Increase in school improvement support
- Increased opportunities for career progression and/or professional experiences

Will the curriculum change?

No. The curriculum will remain the same but may develop over time like any strong curriculum should. Franche Community Primary School will continue to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum tailored to the needs of our pupils. The trust will work in partnership with us to ensure that we provide the best possible curriculum offer to our children. As the years go by, there may be aspects of the curriculum that evolve through collaboration with other schools in Rivers. Equally, aspects of Franche's curriculum offer might influence curriculum development in Rivers.

Would the school still work with the local authority e.g. Maths & English consultants?

The Franche leadership team will work in partnership with Rivers to determine the most appropriate school improvement support. The Rivers CofE trust have good working relationships with Worcestershire LA.

Will the children access any other opportunities by being part of Rivers?

Yes. Rivers place equal importance on pupils' personal development (through enrichment) with high academic standards. In addition to opportunities our pupils already access, they will be involved in collaborative activities with other Rivers' pupils, such as a design and technological project called the Box Car Rally, a mathematics championship, a dance festival, sports competitions, art projects and much more. Eventually, pupils will also be involved in an initiative called 'My Extraordinary Experiences' – 24 things that every pupil experiences before they leave primary school.

Because Rivers is an established and successful trust, they also have access to capital grants and expertise to ensure the school building is the best possible learning environment for pupils and staff, including access to resources and computing equipment fit for the 21st century.

How about the length of the school day, school holidays or Teacher Education Days (TED)?

The Rivers CofE Academy Trust has schools in Worcestershire and they follow the agreed Local Authority term dates. There are no plans to change timetables or the length of the school day. They do have an additional TED each year, so if we join it will be six TED and not five. TED dates are aligned across the trust to enable collaboration. However, at least four and often five of these days are protected for school specific focuses.

What about our WRAP care, TOTS and early years?

The Rivers CofE Academy Trust is a primary specialist trust and place a strong emphasis on WRAP and early years. They value education starting from an early age and have expertise to support it. They also have a school with provision for babies and all schools provide an extended WRAP service, including during holidays.

How would SEND resources and interventions be managed under a trust?

There would be no change, the leaders at Franche would continue to manage, plan and deploy the resources as per the need of our pupils. The Rivers CofE Academy Trust has a strong inclusion team and strategy, enabling us to strengthen our approaches even further.

When joining a trust does this mean we will lose outreach support and specialist services that we currently access?

School leaders will still be able to access outreach or specialist services support if they choose to continue to purchase it from their school budget. However, there are a range of services that The Rivers CofE Trust provide from an educational and professional services perspective. Over time, we would work with them to consider any additional specialist support we may need.

As a result of joining The Rivers CofE Academy Trust, will there be staff redundancies?

No.

Will there be any changes to school

No. Not as a direct result of joining Rivers. We have a stable staff

staff?

team who know our community well and this will continue to be the case. As with any school there are sometimes changes as a normal part of school life and individual circumstances.

Will my pay and conditions change?

No. All staff will transfer under their existing terms and conditions through the TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment) process, save for any ‘measures’ that the Rivers CofE Trust stipulate in the TUPE measures. Your salary, pension, and other contractual entitlements will remain unchanged. You will receive further information on this during the TUPE consultation. There will be additional benefits provided for you that will be shared by Rivers at the consultation events in the coming weeks.

Will I still be employed by the school/LA?

You will become an employee of The Rivers CofE Trust, but you will continue to be based at Franche Community Primary School. This will be fully supported through TUPE.

Will changing my employer impact my continuous service?

No. Continuous service would be maintained.

Does The Rivers CofE Trust recognise unions?

Yes – The Rivers CofE Trust have close links and productive open relationships with unions. There is a Trade Union Recognition Agreement (TURA) in place with six major unions and regular Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) meetings take place between the unions and the trust.

Would teachers and leaders still be able to apply for NPQs through The Rivers CofE Trust?

Yes – through the trust. The Rivers CofE Trust have a thriving Teaching Alliance where a range of professional learning can be accessed for all roles, including NPQs. The Teaching Alliance also runs provision for Early Career Teachers and for initial teacher training and apprenticeships.

Would staff still be able to apply for apprentice training being part of The Rivers CofE Trust?

Yes – through the trust.

Will there be changes to leadership or management?

The existing leadership team will continue to manage the school, supported by the wider expertise of The Rivers CofE Academy Trust.

Will staff have to work across other schools in Rivers?

No. Staff will remain based at Franche Community Primary School unless they choose to apply for or undertake a role at another school within the Trust. However, there are cross-trust roles and opportunities that staff can be a part of or apply for.

What does cross-trust working mean, and what are the implications for staff?

Cross-trust working takes place through a number of different ways e.g. online meetings or staff whom have a cross-trust role having meetings in different schools. This may be where a staff member has joined a cross-school collaboration project. This may mean driving to another school or joining a TEAMS meeting, these are planned in advance and travel costs are reimbursed, subject to suitable car insurance. This will likely impact Lizzie the most, followed by senior leaders more than wider staff. No real difference to the travelling senior leaders do currently to attend meetings and training across Worcestershire.

Will we have to attend training or meetings at the other schools or venues in the MAT?

There will be no regular commitment or expectation for staff to attend meetings at the other school sites. Most training and meetings will continue as normal on Franche's site. Sometimes, there will be training or collaborative opportunities at other venues or on Teams. However, part of our decision making was about a trust that is local. The Rivers CofE Trust has schools near us - they operate a learning hub model to enable close and manageable collaboration for leaders, staff and pupils.

Will school policies change?

Some policies may be changed to promote alignment and in recognition of being part of a single employer e.g. with HR policies. The specifics will be discussed as part of the TUPE process.

Will there be changes to our behaviour policy and expectations?

There may be minor changes to policies to align with The Rivers CofE Trust's behaviour policy, which evolves to meet national statutory guidelines. These would be fully shared with staff and parents. The behaviour policy at Franche would continue to meet the needs of our pupils, as it does currently.

Would the systems staff use for assessment and pupil management change under Rivers?

No. The strongest management information system in the sector right now is Arbor and the most effective assessment system is Insight. We had already decided to move to these systems this academic year as other contracts come to an end. Rivers' schools that use both systems do so with great success.

Does Ofsted inspect Academies? Will conversion change our reinspection timeline?

Yes. In exactly the same way as for maintained schools. The timeline for reinspection will not change if we convert.

Academy governance - How are academies governed?

The Academy Trust (which is a charitable company) would be responsible for all the schools within the Trust. Local Advocates facilitate local governance and test out on the ground what it is like to be a pupil, parent and staff member at the school. The Local Advocates report back to the Trust Board on key matters at a local level, including how well the school is doing and how well the trust is serving the school.

Will school communication to parents change as part of moving to an Academy?

No. The Leadership team at Franche will continue to communicate to parents as they do now. Any changes in the future would be made by Franche's Leadership team. The Rivers CofE Academy Trust produce an annual parents' newsletter to share the impact of the trust's work on pupils and staff.

Will there be any difference for the school's PTA if we become an academy? Including how the money is spent.

No. All Rivers' schools have PTAs and Rivers do not have any involvement in how money is raised and spent. That is up to the PTAs and the leaders in the schools.

What financial benefit does The Rivers CofE Academy Trust get with Franche joining? Is there extra money from the government for the trust?

There is no extra money from the government for The Rivers CofE Academy Trust for Franche joining. The trust works as a Charity and does not make a profit. The trust's mission is 'An extraordinary education for every pupil'. The trust is compelled by a strong moral purpose to ensure support and develop all children to become the best version of themselves, academically and personally. The Trust does not 'make a profit' from schools.

The Rivers CofE Academy Trust is an established medium-sized trust with a strong track record of success. Due to this, they have access to capacity for school improvement support which includes working with schools outside of the trust.

As a medium sized trust, Rivers receives funding to improve school buildings and outdoor environments. This funding is used for specific improvement projects based on the condition of the buildings and the needs of pupils. All schools in the trust have benefited from investment over time to improve their buildings and learning environments. Franche will also benefit from this investment over time.

Does the school keep its own funding or does the trust keep it and share it out?

Franchise would still receive its own General Annual Grant (GAG) funding in the first instance, making sure that the school continues to meet the needs of pupils and the local community. Once the school is gradually aligned with the trust's financial systems and practices it would join the trust's GAG pooling arrangement.

Under this arrangement, GAG funding is managed at trust level and distributed to ensure fairness and sustainability across all schools, allowing resources to be targeted where they are most needed. While this means that a portion of funding is not held exclusively by individual schools, the trust ensures that no school is unfairly impacted by the approach. This will result in additional funding for

Franchise when it is needed the most.

Funding for pupil premium and SEND is not included in the GAG pooling and continues to be allocated directly to schools based on pupil numbers and need.

What are the next steps for Franche if, after consultation and Governing Board review it is decided that joining Rivers is not right?

The Governing Board would re-convene and consider based on feedback received through Consultation what are the barriers identified for not joining Rivers and therefore whether academy conversion is still a consideration for the school. The Governing Board would then review all options, including remaining as a LA Maintained School and decide how best to proceed. Any future decision to formally explore academy conversion would be carried out in exactly the same way with a further consultation period.

Who can I speak to if I have further questions?

You can speak to Lizzie. Additionally, staff briefings and drop-in opportunities will be arranged to ensure everyone has the opportunity to ask questions and receive updates.

Franchise Community Primary School
Useful Links and Further Information



[Franchise Community Primary School Website](#)

[What is a school trust?](#)

[The Rivers CofE Academy Trust Website](#)