

**Bletchington CE (Voluntary  
Controlled) Primary School**

**PROPOSAL TO SEEK A CHANGE OF  
CATEGORY TO VOLUNTARY AIDED**

**CONSULTATION DOCUMENT**

Published by the Governing Body  
May 2012

**This consultative paper is being published following the decision by the Governing Body of Bletchingdon CE (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School to seek a change of category from a Controlled School to an Aided School. The opportunity to propose such a change originally arose from “The Education (Change of maintained School) (England) Regulations 2000”. Since then 23 schools within the Oxford Diocese have changed status (published figures as at March 2012)**

## **1. Background**

**When initially established all Church of England schools were “Aided”; however, following the 1944 Education Act, they became either Aided or Controlled (by the Local Authority or LA). Governing bodies of Aided Schools have specific responsibilities in the same areas of Employment, Admissions, Buildings, Religious Education and Collective Worship. Bletchingdon School is a Voluntary Controlled school under Local Authority governance.**

## **2. The Reason for change**

**i) The school is unlikely to continue in its current status. One way or another we will feel the need to follow changes designated by the Local Authority, Woodstock partnership and other local schools. There is a risk of change of status being imposed on us in the future. This may be out of our control.**

**ii) The Government is already imposing Academy status on schools throughout the country. Schools are actively being encouraged to pursue Academy status and seek out private sponsors. The Governing Body has concerns that by moving to Academy status, the school may lose its identity, and local community management and support services currently being supplied by the LA may become more expensive and harder to source.**

An Oxford County Council Statement, April 2012, from their Intranet, states “We are aware that, in order to achieve the highest possible standards, schools will need access to good quality support services, the effective provision of which may be compromised by a significant, but unplanned movement by schools to become academies. Because of our concerns about such an unplanned transition over a period of time, and the effect this may have on remaining schools and the viability of services, we believe the Council needs to adopt a more planned and strategic approach to the issue than it has hitherto.

### 3. What would change and what would not change?

#### i) **Staffing**

The governing body would become the employer of all the staff. The terms, conditions and continuity of the current staff of the school would be unaffected. All existing staff have a guarantee of job security during the transition and will have the same employees' rights as they have now.

#### ii) **Religious Education**

The governing body would be responsible for deciding the school's policy on Religious Education and Collective Worship in relation to its Christian and Trust Deed.

#### iii) **Governing body**

A new instrument of government will come into force giving a majority of places to the foundation; however, initially we expect the existing governors will continue to serve on the new governing body. There will still be elected parent representatives as well as representatives of the staff and the LEA and Bletchingdon Charity. The foundation governors will be nominated by the Diocese of Oxford.

#### iv) **Admissions**

At present the Oxfordshire Local Authority is responsible for admissions at the school. Following the change of category the governing body will be responsible for admissions. The governing body anticipates no change from the present policy. Any future change brought about by changing circumstances and pressure on the school will be subject to separate consultation.

#### v) **Capital Maintenance and Improvements**

The governing body (and consequently the Diocese) will be responsible for maintenance and will receive a contribution from the Department for Education of 90% of the costs. The governing body must pay 10% of the costs of maintenance.

#### vi) **The National Curriculum**

All the requirements of the National Curriculum still apply in a voluntary aided school; therefore there will be no changes in the general curriculum of the school. We shall continue to work to the same high standards that we have now.

#### vii) **Inclusion**

Bletchingdon School already serves both the children of local Christians and those from the wide ethnic and cultural range of the local community. It will continue to do so.

#### viii) **Variety of provision**

As an Aided school Bletchingdon School believes it can ensure its long-term contribution to the variety of primary educational provision in Bletchingdon and its surrounding area.

**xi) Ethos**

Parents at present often comment on how much they value the Christian ethos of the school. A change to Aided category will help to make this ethos more secure into the future.

**4. Timing**

**There will be a consultation period of 6 weeks (excluding school holidays) with interested parties (e.g. staff and parents) followed by a further 6-week period when a decision is published nationally. There will then be a 2-month period in which the LA make their decision. In some cases a transition may take up to 8 months in total.**

**5. Conclusion**

**A move towards VA status will give access to alternative funding opportunities, Diocese support networks which are already in existence, and a body of advisors who can assist in the transition to VA status and ultimately through to the almost inevitable Academy status under the umbrella of the Diocese. The weight of the Diocese will act in our favour and ultimately give us more control of our destiny.**

**Nothing that we are proposing should in any way lower the high standards of education for which Bletchingdon School is well known, but these proposals should help the school to grow and develop in the future.**

**The Oxford Diocesan Board of Education has 280 schools which are a mixture of Controlled and Aided. The Board recognises and welcomes all its schools as part of the Diocesan family and welcomes each Controlled School Governing Body having the opportunity under the regulations to make its own decision as to whether to propose the change in category.**

**6. Consultation**

**Staff, parents, local residents, neighbouring schools, the PCC, the Bletchingdon Charity, the Diocese of Oxford and the Local Authority are invited to comment on this proposal by Friday 20<sup>th</sup> July 2012. A meeting has been arranged for Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> June 2012 from 6pm til 7pm. at Bletchingdon School at which you can find out more and ask any questions.**

**We want to know what you think.  
Please use this form to let us know your views.**

Please tick the box that most nearly matches your view.

1. I think that Bletchingdon School should become a voluntary aided school.

Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Not sure	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. I think that the governing body should give us more information about this idea.

Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Not sure	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. I am interested in this project because:  
(Please tick as many boxes as apply to you.)

I live in the area served by the school.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have children attending the school.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I work in the school.	<input type="checkbox"/>
My children attend other schools locally.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I worship at another Christian church in the area	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am a member of another faith	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am not a member of any faith community	<input type="checkbox"/>

**When you have completed this form please return it to the school for the attention of the Clerk to the Governors before Friday 20<sup>th</sup> July 2012.**

**If you want any further information please come along to the consultation meeting on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> June at 6pm at the school.**

**Thank you for your help**