



Friday 2nd May 2025

Dear Playschool Parents, Carers and Community

RE: Consultation on Change of Status of Polesden Lacey Playschool from a Charity to Academy

Polesden Lacey Infant School is in the process of changing its status and becoming part of the LEO Academy Trust.

As you may, or may not already be aware, Polesden Lacey Playschool is an independent charity run early years setting, that does not form part of the school and is governed and managed by a board of volunteer trustees (The Committee). Although our playschool is at full capacity and thriving, our biggest struggle has always been the recruitment and retention of parent volunteers to assist with the governance.

The Committee have been in discussion with the LEO Academy Trust about the possibility of moving our organisation model away from being an independent charity, Committee run setting and to being incorporated as part of the Academy Trust instead, so that all our wonderful services can continue but parental involvement is no longer a requirement.

What are the benefits of playschool joining the Academy?

We believe there are many benefits to joining the Academy, and it would be a positive step forward for our setting. Some of the main benefits would be:

- **Increased Funding** Academies receive funding directly from the central government, meaning more funds and investment will be available for our early years setting
- **Improved Staff Conditions** Academies can set their own pay and conditions for staff, offering better compensation, professional development and benefits that we cannot currently offer
- **Continuity for Children Transitioning to Reception** Greater alignment with Polesden Lacey Infant School can help ensure an even smoother transition for children moving from playschool on to reception

- **Shared Resources** Sharing resources with the school will become more efficient and beneficial to both the school and playschool children
- **Governance Stability** Responsibility for governance would transfer to the Academy, removing the burden from parents to serve as trustees. Currently, if we are unable to meet committee requirements, the playschool risks closure. As part of the Academy, we would also benefit from more operational support—including health and safety, administration, HR, finance, and legal services—which would significantly ease the pressure on playschool leaders, while ensuring continued compliance with all regulatory requirements

Will the conversion affect the staff?

If the playschool joins the Academy, all staff currently employed, will automatically transfer to the Trust, keeping their current pay and conditions. While the Academy would have more freedom to make changes to pay and conditions in the future, any changes would always involve full consultation with the staff.

Will the Playschool change?

- There will be no immediate changes to the service we offer
- The Playschool will have continuous service, and if you are currently on our waiting list, you will remain on our waiting list
- Our staff will all remain with us and their contracts automatically moved over to the Academy

Financial pressure on the early years sector is increasing every year and many charity run settings using our model are struggling to remain viable and being forced to close their doors. Unfortunately, it has become an increasingly unsustainable business model. We feel that with the support of the Academy, our playschool would only go from strength to strength.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact myself or arrange to speak with our Manager, Caroline O'Leary.

Yours sincerely,

Ellie Pragnell
Chair, on behalf of Polesden Lacey Playschool Committee