



Tring School

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Dear Staff

Important Information from Governors

Tring School has been following the position of Academy conversion both within Herts and nationwide. Nothing is more important to us than ensuring that our students get the best opportunities available and that they exceed their own expectations when it comes to their exam results.

With that in mind, it will come as no surprise to you that we, along with many other schools across the UK, have been looking at the option of becoming an Academy. Governors have recently met with the Hertfordshire County Council advisor on Academies in order to gain an overview of the benefits and responsibilities of becoming an Academy.

At our last full Governing Body meeting on 8 December 2011, the Governors and Leadership Team made a unanimous decision to begin the consultation process and investigations that are the first stage in the decision making process towards conversion to Academy status. At this point, no decision to convert has been made. We want to let you know that you will be fully consulted prior to any decision being taken. We feel that it is important to share this information with you before the Christmas break so that you are fully aware of the developments taking place. We will include your views with those of all other stakeholders to inform our final decision. During the next term we will hold briefing and information sessions and provide the opportunity for you to ask questions and give us your feedback.

You might already know what is involved in becoming an Academy, but for clarity we have prepared an information document which is available at the end of this letter and will also be placed on the school website.

Yours sincerely

Mrs L Whitesmith
Chair of Governors

Mrs S Collings
Headteacher



What is an Academy?

Academies are publicly funded independent schools, free from local authority control. Academies have an Academy Trust which is responsible for the land and assets of the Academy.

What is the role of the Academy Trust?

An Academy Trust is a charitable company responsible for the running of the Academy and has control over the land and other assets. It has a strategic role in running the Academy, but delegates day-to-day management of the school to the governors.

What will the responsibilities of the Governing Body be?

The Governing Body will be responsible for establishing the Academy Trust. The Academy Trust will then enter into a funding agreement with the Secretary of State for the running of the Academy. The Academy Trust (made up of members) will be responsible for appointing the governors (also known as Directors or Trustees) to the Governing Body of the Academy. It is the Governing Body which manages the Academy on behalf of the members of the Academy Trust. The key responsibilities are to:

- ensure the quality of educational provision
- challenge and monitor the performance of the Academy
- manage the Academy Trust's finances and property
- employ staff

It will be for the members of the Governing Body of the school to decide and agree, in discussion with the Secretary of State, who among them would wish to be members of the Academy Trust and which of them would wish to be governors of the Academy Trust (note that it is possible to be both a member and governor).

What freedoms do Academies enjoy?

Academies can benefit from greater freedoms to help the school innovate and raise standards. These freedoms include:

- freedom from LA control
- financial freedom (direct funding from central government)
- ability to set their own pay and conditions for staff
- freedoms around the delivery of the curriculum
- ability to change the lengths of terms and school days.

What these freedoms would mean for Tring School?

The principal difference for the school would be freedom from local authority control and direct control over all our finances.

What are the financial implications for Tring School?

Academies should receive the same level of per-pupil funding as they would receive from the local authority (LA) as a maintained or foundation school. They also receive funding to meet their additional responsibilities that are no longer provided for them by the LA. This means that we would receive the full amount of funding available to the school without any being 'top sliced' by the local authority; currently Herts County Council take around 7- 9% of funding given to the school. With full funding, the school would then have the freedom to choose which services to 'buy in' from the local authority (or elsewhere). We calculate that this direct funding approach would increase the school's budget by over £100,000 for the first year after conversion to an Academy.

Do we intend to change staff pay and conditions?

There would be no change to staff terms and conditions. All existing staff will be covered by TUPE -Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) regulations.

Do we intend to change the school curriculum?

Academies have greater legal freedom to develop their own curriculum and move beyond the national curriculum. At Tring School we are constantly seeking to improve our curriculum so that it meets the needs of all our students. This will continue if we become an Academy.

Do we intend to alter the lengths of terms or school days?

At this point in time we have no intention of changing either the length of the school day or the length or timings of school terms.

Do we have to support other schools?

One of the conditions of converting to Academy is that we support a local school to help raise standards. We will liaise with our local partner schools to make this decision.

*Frequently Asked Questions***Will the name of the school change?**

There is no requirement to change the name of the school (eg to incorporate the word 'Academy').

What happens about exclusions?

Academies must provide full-time off-site education from the sixth day of a fixed period exclusion. This is currently the case for all maintained schools and will not change if we convert to an Academy.

Will we retain our specialist Humanities specialism?

Academies will be in exactly the same position as other schools regarding specialist status. Tring School will therefore remain as a specialist Humanities College.

What funding will be available to help schools convert to an Academy?

Schools converting to Academy status will receive a grant of £25,000 to assist with any cost incurred, although we do not yet know whether this amount will cover all costs. If costs are less than this amount schools will retain the difference.

Do academies have to have an external sponsor?

There is no requirement for the new style academies to have an external sponsor.

How will converting to an Academy affect SEN support?

Our excellent SEN provision will continue with students being supported throughout the school. Academy status will not affect the admission of students who nominate the school on a statement.

Who would own the land and the buildings?

The land and buildings would be transferred from the local authority to the Academy Trust.

What changes will there be on a day to day basis?

There will be very little change to the way the school is run on a daily basis. However the increased revenue will enable us to maintain, and improve, the high standards at Tring School.