



KING EDWARD VI SCHOOL

LICHFIELD

Proposed conversion to Academy Status and the setting up of a Multi-Academy Trust

King Edward VI School has always been firmly rooted in its community with strong and developing links to other schools and partners. Our successful inspection in March took us one step closer on our journey to outstanding provision for our students. In the spring and summer terms we developed an effective partnership with The Long Eaton School. We have seen first-hand the benefits to learning and teaching that working alongside another school can bring, providing many opportunities for joint working and the sharing of good practice.

The governing body of King Edward VI School is currently considering whether we should set up a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) with The Long Eaton School. Both schools will be running a public consultation over the coming weeks to gather views from all stakeholders. The governing body is committed to considering the views of all interested parties and we explain below how you may make your views known.

Our previous consultation on Academy status took place in 2011. At that time, following the consultation, governors decided that it was not in the best interests of the school. However, it was agreed that governors would keep this under review. The national picture has changed, with over 1870 of around 3200 secondary schools now being Academies. This figure rises each month. The Department for Education has made a clear commitment to encourage primary and secondary schools to become academies, based on 'evidence that giving heads and teachers greater freedom over their curriculum, budget and staff can help improve the quality of the education they provide and reduce the attainment gap'¹. We seek to ensure that any partnership can support our aim of outstanding provision and improving outcomes for our students.

An Academy is a publicly funded independent school that is not managed by a local authority. Once converted, academies are run by an academy trust, which is a charitable company limited by guarantee.

The school would cease to be maintained by the Local Authority but would instead be funded and maintained directly by the Department for Education. In addition this would mean that the school can retain the Local Authority Educational Services Grant portion of its budget. The running of the school would be through a direct Academy Agreement with the Department for Education. In September 2014, eight regional commissioners were appointed to oversee the academies in their area.

It is likely that a two-phased process would be used. This would involve the school obtaining Foundation status and the freehold for the school site then entering in to a charitable Multi Academy Trust to hold ownership of the schools' sites and be the conduit for funding.

Upon conversion, the school staff would become employed by the Multi-Academy Trust. The governing body of King Edward VI School values strong working relationships with all staff. The employment rights of all members of staff would be protected by TUPE, Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) regulations 2006 as amended by The Collective Redundancies and Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) (Amendment) Regulations 2014. This means that these employment rights would transfer to the Trust under the same terms and conditions of employment. Pension rights and continuity of service record would be preserved. Moreover, the governing body undertakes to ensure that the terms and conditions for all

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existing staff remain at least as good as those for staff in equivalent posts in schools which are still bound by national and local agreements.

What is a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT)?

A Multi-Academy Trust is a charitable company which is responsible for running two or more academies. The Academy Trust has a master funding agreement with the Department for Education but with separate funding for each individual Academy based on the usual budget formula. The MAT is also the single employer for staff in all its schools. The MAT may include primary, secondary and special schools. There are three levels of governance within a MAT: Members, Directors and Local Governing Bodies. The Board of Directors has ultimate responsibility for the performance of each academy and for setting the strategic direction of the MAT, and it typically then delegates the day-to-day running of each academy to a local governing body.

Why The Long Eaton School?

The principles of an equal partnership only work where there is a high level of trust between schools and a common purpose. The opportunity we have already had to work together at all levels across the two schools means that at the outset of a formal partnership we can define clear benefits to learning & teaching and the wider organisational structure. Both governing bodies are committed to fully exploring this potential.

Long Eaton is in Derbyshire, just over 33 miles from Lichfield. By car it is about 45 minutes away. We are not seeking to set up a new brand or to change the ethos of either school. There would be no external sponsor involved. The Long Eaton School is already an academy and we are looking to enter a Multi-Academy Trust with a common purpose: to provide the best all-round education possible for our students. The timing and the climate for both schools are right for setting up a Multi-Academy Trust.

We have strong partnerships with other schools in the district and this will continue. Parents have the choice of three Ofsted rated good schools in Lichfield and by setting up a Multi-Academy Trust with a school at a certain distance we also retain the fundamental character of our school without any change in the local dynamics. Governors agreed early in discussions about school status that joining an existing Academy Trust as a junior partner or being part of a chain or sponsored academy was not in our best interests.

What will it mean for students, parents and staff at King Edward VI School?

In many ways, students will not see a huge difference. They will have the same headteacher; the school name will be unchanged; the school uniform and identity will not change as a result of the Academy Trust; there are no plans to change the school day, the school year or the holiday pattern. The ethos will not change and we will continue to be an inclusive school which is committed to working with and for its local community.

We hope that the most important change, over time, will be the raising of achievement for students as we work together to ensure they have access to the best possible provision.

The school will technically be its own admissions authority. However, we will retain our current published admissions criteria and "normal area" for catchment, subject to any significant changes in local circumstances. We will act in accordance with the Government's Code of Practice for admissions and continue to consult on our admissions policy in accordance with the Code. Admissions will continue to be coordinated (as now) by Staffordshire County Council.

Governance will change as outlined above. The school will maintain a Local Governing Body but will have representation at Member and Director level as part of the Trust. This will allow the governors to keep a strong involvement at all levels of decision-making with the strategic decisions at Trust level having added benefit of objectivity across two schools.

As we would receive our funding direct from the Department for Education via the Education Funding Agency we would have greater autonomy in how we spend this. We have to take on additional responsibilities as part of this but the process prior to conversion would ensure that we have a clear picture of the costs as well as the



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opportunity to ensure that we always get value for money. We can also use the flexibilities provided by being part of a larger organisation to help us to raise standards further, by collaborating between the two schools on areas of mutual benefit and by exercising economies of scale whenever we can make use of our increased “buying power” to allow more of our funding to be directed to the classroom.

We would also have greater freedom over the taught curriculum. Whilst we anticipate that the major changes will be linked to examination reform (over which we have no control) it may be that we seek to use this freedom to ensure we maintain a healthy balance which is in the interests of our students when circumstances demand.

Fundamentally, establishing our own Multi-Academy Trust with a strong ethos and collaborative approach also frames our approach in a changing national landscape. We will continue to be a Staffordshire school and work with colleagues across schools on school improvement. The move towards school-to-school support is an opportunity to ensure that we develop positive partnerships rather than find ourselves in a position where they are defined for us. Where we feel it is best value, we will still be able to continue to use Staffordshire services.

Academy status is intended to promote innovation by giving school leaders more freedom to decide how best to meet the needs of their pupils, parents and wider communities. A vital part of the Government’s stated vision is to create a more diverse school system offering excellence and choice, where each school has a strong ethos and sense of mission and acts as a centre of excellence or specialist provision.

There is an expectation from government that schools will take a lead in raising attainment and removing barriers to learning. The additional freedoms open to us as an Academy and our commitment to co-operation and collaboration with other agencies and schools will be an important component in our further development. There is flexibility for other partners to join a Multi-Academy Trust but governors have no intention of pursuing this at the current time.

The consultation begins formally with this letter to parents. In the coming weeks we will be communicating with all stakeholders (including students, staff, parents, local schools and other organisations).

The governors would like to invite you to a meeting on Wednesday 19th November to outline some of the changes and respond to your initial questions. If you have specific questions to which you would like a response at the meeting it would be helpful to have those in advance. These can be sent using the contact details shown below.

▶ **Wednesday 19th November – Parents Meeting – 7-8 pm – Bader Hall**

We are inviting all parents of students on roll, or those who have made an application for entry into Year 7 in 2015, to express their views about the proposals. These can be sent by email to academyconsultation@kingedwardvi-lichfield.staffs.sch.uk, or by written communication via Mrs Zoe MacKinnon, Clerk to Governors at the school address.

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For parents of students currently on roll at the school who are unable to attend, who would like to make representations in person, governors will also be available in school at the following events:

- ▶ Year 12 Courses Evening on Wednesday 12th November 7-9pm
- ▶ Year 8 Parents' Evening on Thursday 27th November 4.30-7pm
- ▶ Christmas Fair on Friday 28th November 6-8pm

Monday 24th November is the deadline for questions from parents as by Monday 1st December we intend to publish all responses to parent questions on the school website www.keslichfield.org.uk

Monday 8th December marks the close of public consultation period and responses must be received by that date. Following further governor planning group meetings to review all stakeholder feedback there will be a full governors' meeting on Thursday 11th December when a decision will be made about whether to continue with the process.

This will also require a positive response from the consultation at The Long Eaton School in order to move in to the next phase of detailed analysis. There is no binding decision by governors until a final conversion agreement is signed; either party may withdraw at any time if it is not considered in the school's best interest to continue.

We look forward to hearing from you or seeing you at the meeting on Wednesday 19th November.

Yours sincerely,



Mr C. R. Cartwright
Chair of Governors



Ms J. Rutherford
Headteacher

This document is also published on the school website: www.keslichfield.org.uk

Website for The Long Eaton School: www.longeaton.derbyshire.sch.uk

ⁱ <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/increasing-the-number-of-academies-and-free-schools-to-create-a-better-and-more-diverse-school-system>

The Department for Education website contains a range of documentation linked to academy status and routes to conversion.

<https://www.gov.uk/become-an-academy-information-for-schools>