



Friday 4th February 2011

Whitehill Community Academy Proposal

Welcome to our guide to give parents, staff and the local community information on our Academy Status proposal.

Dates for the Diary:

- Staff consultation meeting
Wednesday 16th February
3:30 p.m.
- Parental Consultation meetings
Tuesday 15th February
3:30 p.m. and
6:00 p.m.

You will be aware from recent news coverage that outstanding schools have been invited by the new Coalition Government to apply to become Academies. Our Governing Body met on the 3rd February to consider how this could benefit our continued development. At this meeting the Governors voted, overwhelmingly, to agree to the proposed intention to convert to an Academy School.

We have started consultations with the staff and we would like to include all parents and stakeholders to give you a greater understanding of our thinking. This consultation will run until the Governors decide whether or not to accept the Funding agreement and therefore become an Academy.

We would like to invite you along to a parents' meeting so that you can get further information about this and ask any questions you may have. These will be held on Tuesday 15th February at 3:30 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. at school in the Key Stage 2 hall.

What is an Academy?

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Academies are independent schools that receive funding directly from the government. This provides them with certain freedoms which in turn can enable the school to gain wider partnerships and support.

Over 400 schools in England have taken the opportunity to acquire Academy status, with over 1000 registering an interest. We are excited by the opportunity to work on our communities' behalf to provide outstanding primary education for your children.

Academies have also found continued, if not increased, popularity in their local areas and often the process of conversion has given extra impetus to their development work.

Why Academy status for Whitehill?

Governors believe that this opportunity will provide our school with more autonomy to work in ways which most benefit our pupils and pupil groups. We will have greater freedom to be flexible in a range of both curriculum and financial matters so that we can offer the best possible opportunities for the children in our care as well as bringing benefits to our local area.

Our Whitehill Community Learning Trust is really effective and we are already seeing a significant impact on standards within school. On becoming an Academy we will simply keep our Trust which is super news. All Whitehill Community Learning Trust partners support our move to Academy Status.

We already have experience of buying in services from a number of non-Local Authority providers. These providers have continuously proved to be of both good value and good service. As we will have more control over our budgets we will be able to extend this across a broader range of services as well as retaining services from the Local Authority where this is a benefit to the school and pupils.

How will my child's learning be affected?

Although we have an outstanding curriculum Governors believe that by being an Academy this will be enhanced even further. We will have greater freedom to explore opportunities for the school through the interests and expertise of our trust partners which will help us to further develop our curriculum and continue moving forward so we can provide the best opportunities for our children.

What about staff ?

We have an excellent staff and all of our permanent staff will be able to transfer into the academy. We seek to maintain current pay and conditions for staff but will have the ability in the future, through Academy status, to improve staffing ratio's and develop staff expertise to further develop the curriculum and the provision for the children.

Governance ?

The Governing body has been recently re-constituted when we became a Foundation school with a Trust. We will be able to keep similar proportions of Governors on transfer to becoming an Academy.

What are the next steps?

So far the Governors have submitted an expression of interest and we have been allocated a Department for Education officer to work alongside the Leadership team and Governing Body.

The school has started to consult staff and parents and behind the scenes we are working with solicitors and the Department for Education to look at legal considerations, our present services and their providers.

The school's application will be considered by a DfE board and if granted the Secretary of State will make an Academy order and release £25,000 to support the process.

This process would involve aspects relating to Governing Bodies, land, property, staff transfer and company registration. A statutory consultation involving interested parties, about becoming an Academy, has to take place before the Secretary of State signs a funding agreement.

Timeline

- 26.1.11—School registered an interest to receive further information on Academy Status.
- 3.2.11—Governing meeting to approve the decision to pursue the transfer to Academy status.
- 4.2.11—Application form submitted to DfE with Governor minutes and Trust members permission.
- 4.2.11—Academy guide distributed to staff and parents.
- 15.2.11—Parent's meeting to discuss Academy proposal 3:30 and 6:00 p.m.
- 16.2.11—Staff meeting to discuss Academy proposal.
- 3.3.11—Governing Body meeting to discuss representations.
- TBA—Union representatives meeting to discuss Academy proposal and start TUPE process.

Frequently Asked Questions

What changes will we see at Whitehill if it became an Academy?

The school and the Governors have identified opportunities which the extra freedom brings by becoming an Academy. This would improve our ability to meet the educational needs of children at Whitehill. However there are no plans to change the following aspects of life at the school: Staff Terms and Conditions; Admissions; SEN provision; Uniform; School Meals; Current Clubs will continue (choir, sports etc). We will however still be judged by the DfE on academic achievement and attainment.

How will this affect moving to any Local Authority control secondary school?

The application for secondary school is based on the individual secondary school's admissions policy and not Whitehill's. This will have no effect.

The school has not received an Ofsted inspection since 2008 how do we know we are still outstanding?

Whitehill received an Ofsted in June 2008—this was outstanding in all areas. Of the 27 statements 24 were outstanding and 3 were good. We are one of the best schools in the country. Since the inspection our school improvement monitoring procedures have shown further improvement. School achievement and attainment is outstanding.

How will the school be monitored if they opt out of the Local Authority?

The DfE closely monitors all data in relation to our school and we may receive an Ofsted inspection as other schools do in the future.

Will Whitehill mentor other schools? If so how will that work?

Whitehill sees working with other schools as an excellent opportunity to share good practice. In the past Whitehill has worked with other schools. Whitehill would receive an additional £25K for mentoring another school. The Leadership is well developed and has the capacity to innovate in this way.

When does the school wish to become an academy and how has this date been arrived at?

At the present time outstanding schools and good schools with outstanding features are able to apply for academy status. As we are outstanding it is likely that we will receive preferential treatment over other good schools and therefore our conversion will be quicker. The school feels that the first to become 'flagship' schools will receive the maximum support in order to succeed. However, now the first step in the process has been made, there is no set timescale prior to any transfer taking place. The school is keen, whilst keeping this moving, to ensure all consultations have taken place and all policies, legal processes and procedures are clearly in place prior to transfer. The school is NOT committed to becoming an Academy if it becomes apparent that it is not to the schools advantage this would be known before a 'funding agreement' is signed.

Why did Whitehill become a Trust school if it intended to become an Academy anyway?

The Trust school process started back in June 2009 well before the new coalition government proposed the Academy initiative. It took a lot of time and effort to establish the Trust partners and we didn't want to lose this opportunity for the school. We became a Foundation school with a Trust. After some research it has become clear that it is only a small step to convert from a Foundation school with a Trust to an Academy. It also, most importantly, allows us to maintain our newly formed Whitehill Community Learning Trust.

The Governing Body would like to thank, in advance, all the staff, parents and members of the local community for their anticipated involvement within the process. We always value your opinions and we will work together with any concerns and questions that you may have.

Please put your comments in writing and send these to school, equally you can discuss these at the parent evening.

Mr Hepplestone, Mr Sayles and Mrs Waugh are available as a point of contact as well as Parent Governors all of which can be contacted through the main school office.

Parents Governors include:

Mr Hudson

Mrs Banks

Mrs Wilson

Mr Mulhall

Mr Firth

School contact details are as follows:

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