



Trust Status – a new opportunity for Castle Lower School

Dear Parents and Carers,

The Governing Body of Castle Lower School is thinking about becoming a Trust school, in partnership with Goldington Green Lower, Goldington Middle, Hazeldene Lower, Mark Rutherford Upper, Newnham Middle, Putnoe Lower and The Hills Lower Schools. This letter is to explain our ideas and proposals, invite you to a consultation meeting on 26th November [7.00pm at Mark Rutherford Upper School in the Drama Hall], and to ask for your views.

Our proposed Trust

Trust status is a relatively new arrangement introduced by the Education and Inspections Act 2006. Trust schools are part of the local authority system, but supported by a charitable Trust which will appoint some of the governors. The Governing Body will continue to run the school and be responsible for its performance, and there will be no change to the Leadership Team in any school. There are now more than 100 Trust schools up and running in the country, including the Sharnbook, Hastingsbury and Samuel Whitbread pyramids in Bedfordshire.

The main purpose of forming a Trust is to raise educational standards through collaboration between schools and with external partners. Schools in Bedford have long experience of collaboration through the Education Action Zone, Excellence Cluster and the Learning Community, which still operates voluntarily. We seek to develop this further by working together through the North East Bedford Learning Trust, focusing initially on collaboration that will support the development of the Every Child Matters agenda through personalising learning - identified by the Department for Children Schools and Families as a key priority in improving standards in education.

The proposal is that all eight schools will establish a charitable Trust (North East Bedford Learning Trust) with external partners. The role of a partner is not financial, rather it is to share skills and expertise with schools to help raise standards and enrich the experience of pupils. Currently Bedfordshire Police, Bedford College, the University of Bedfordshire and The Bedford Charity [The Harpur Trust] have confirmed that they wish to be partners in the North East Bedford Learning Trust.

Schools already have contact with one or other of these prospective partners and we are looking to build further on the relationships that have developed so far. A Trust will enable existing links to be formalised and established on a longer-term basis.

The North East Bedford Learning Trust will have a board of trustees comprised of one representative from each school and a representative from each external partner. This board, in turn, will appoint a maximum of two governors to each school's governing body.

What does this mean for pupils?

We will continue to teach the National Curriculum, but will benefit from our partners' experience and ideas to raise standards in how we:

- tailor lessons and options to meet every pupil's needs
- build on the school's strong academic record and help us go further by bringing new ideas and opportunities for our pupils
- improve the way in which we support pupils to decide what they want to do with their lives, to plan how to get there, and give them realistic advice
- extend curricular and extra-curricular provision using specialist support

Existing projects will continue, but the new Trust arrangements will, over time, strengthen and enrich opportunities for pupils.

What does this mean for our school community?

Trust schools have greater autonomy but remain part of the Local Authority's family of maintained schools. As such, we will still be inspected by Ofsted and monitored by the Local Authority. We will still teach the National Curriculum and be bound by the School Admissions Code.

The process of gaining Trust status requires schools to also acquire Foundation status, which means the school's governing body, instead of the Local Authority, will be the employer of all school staff. The governing body must abide by all existing national Terms and Conditions for teaching and non-teaching staff, resulting in no noticeable impact on their current situation.

The change in status also means that ownership of each school's land and assets will be transferred to the governing body, and held on trust by the North East Bedford Learning Trust. The governing body, through the Trust, can make decisions concerning selling land, but must do so in conjunction with, and with the approval of, the Local Authority. The Local Authority will continue to be responsible for strategic decisions about education and will retain the power to dispose of land and assets if required.

Consultation process

Please let us know what you think about the proposal. You can

- talk to the governors of our school (details available from the school's office or email via the school's website)
- come to the open meeting at Mark Rutherford Upper School on 26th November (7.00pm in the Drama Hall)
- send back our consultation questionnaire or write to us at the school

You can comment until 12th December. The governors will review all the comments and will decide whether to go ahead (and whether to amend the proposals to reflect your suggestions and concerns). We will also publish a formal summary of the consultation responses.

We will also be consulting with the wider community and other stakeholders.

Although there will be another chance to comment on the formal proposals during the Spring Term before a final decision is taken, we would encourage you to give us your comments at this stage rather than waiting. That will enable the governing body to take your views into account in developing our formal proposals.

Further information

More information on trust schools can be found on the following websites:

<http://www.trustandfoundationschools.org.uk>

<http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/sie/si/eips/trusts/>

Yours Sincerely,

Margaret Kubicek (Chair of Governors)

M. J. Marsh (Headteacher)

