

27 January 2012

Dear Parent/Carer

Consultation: Should Beaumont School become an Academy?

As you will be aware from previous letters and regular articles in Beaumont Life, over the past year the Governing Body has been investigating the conversion of the school to Academy status. The Governors have taken the issue of Academy conversion very seriously and have already completed a significant amount of research. The process at Beaumont is complicated by the Field, Access and Buildings (FAB) project and we have been careful to ensure that there is no adverse effect on the FAB project. We are in dialogue with the Department for Education (DfE) and Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) to move forward with both projects in parallel and we are now confident that both can be achieved successfully.

Since our last letter to you dated 17 November 2011 the Governing Body has registered its interest with the DfE in becoming an Academy. We are now consulting staff, parents, students and the local community regarding the proposed conversion of Beaumont School to Academy status.

We would like to invite you to an open meeting at the school to discuss the possibility of Beaumont School converting to become an Academy. The meeting will be held at the school at 7.00pm on **Wednesday 22 February 2012** and all parents and carers are welcome.

We invite you to submit questions, comments or concerns to the Chair of Governors of Beaumont School, Mike Tidball, either in an envelope marked for his attention or via e-mail to head@beaumont.herts.sch.uk headed 'Academy Consultation.' If you have a question which you would like specifically answered at the meeting, please put it in writing **by 9.00am on Monday 20 February 2012**. Further comments are welcome until the close of the consultation **at 9.00am on Friday 24 February 2012**.

At the time of writing, and subject to the results of consultation, we anticipate that conversion could feasibly take place around 1 July 2012. However, we can, of course, stop the process at any time (if we are not satisfied with the situation) up to the time of signing of the Funding Agreement, which is normally two weeks prior to conversion to Academy status.

For further information on Academy status and a summary of the Governors' research please see over.

The final decision on whether to apply for Academy status lies with the Governing Body. The consultation plays the important role of enabling you as parents and carers to get involved in the process, ask questions and raise any concerns you may have so that the Governors' final decision reflects as far as possible the wishes of the wider school community.

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Hitch (Mrs)
Headteacher

Mike Tidball
Chair of Governors

Further Information on Academy Status and a Summary of the Governors' Research

There would be **three key structural differences** if we were to convert to Academy status:

1. The school would cease to be maintained by the Local Authority but would instead be funded and maintained directly by the DfE. In addition, this would mean that the school could retain the Local Authority Central Spend Equivalent Grant portion of its budget.
2. A charitable Academy Trust would be set up to manage the school's site, be the conduit for funding and appoint the Governing Body of the school. It is anticipated that all existing Governors would have the right to complete their terms of office, this would ensure continuity of Governance. In making decisions on the composition of the Academy Trust and Governing Body, the Governors would ensure that all stakeholder groups were appropriately represented on these bodies.
3. The school staff would become employed by the Academy Trust. The Governing Body of Beaumont School prides itself on having excellent relationships with all the staff of the school. The employment rights of all members of staff would be protected by TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment)) Regulations which came into force in 2006. 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 records would be preserved.

In its research so far the Governing Body has come to the following conclusions as to why a conversion might be in the best interests of the school:

1. Becoming an Academy would protect our funding so that we can continue to meet the school's aim of providing high quality learning opportunities within a broad and balanced curriculum without compromising on quality, breadth or choice.
2. It may be easier to obtain capital funding and we certainly envisage additional revenue funding. Greater control over the site and buildings would be helpful, as well as independence to make other decisions as appropriate, rather than having to negotiate with HCC on relatively minor matters. However, we would want to continue to work closely with HCC, as well as with other local schools.
3. As a result of conversion it is anticipated that we would receive significant additional funding that would not be available to the school if we were to remain with maintained status. It is difficult to be precise about this as detailed funding information is not yet available for the academic year starting September 2012. However, we anticipate that it will be in excess of £100,000.
4. Becoming an Academy would have no impact on the current ethos and values of the school; neither will it have an impact on the quality of curriculum, teaching and learning. We would also be able to continue our successful collaborations with our partner schools and other local schools; and there would be no need for a change to the school's name, logo or uniform.
5. Becoming an Academy would not mean that we would require an outside sponsor, but we would be required to support another school. As with our current partnership arrangements, we would expect such an arrangement to be beneficial for Beaumont.
6. Given the number of local schools which have converted or have plans to do so, we also have concerns at being left behind with a Local Authority that may not be able to provide an adequate level of support.
7. Becoming an Academy would allow the school the opportunity to review its admissions procedure from time to time in consultation with parents, students and staff. As a maintained school we currently adhere to the HCC code which is also reviewed annually and we would anticipate few, if any, changes.
8. If we were to convert to Academy status, all staff would undergo a TUPE process for the transfer of their employment to the new Academy. However, we would continue to follow the national School Pay and Conditions Document following such a process.

We are currently building a section on Academy status on the website, www.beaumontschool.com with a link from the front page. This includes previous correspondence to parents.

If you wish to find out more about Academy status, please refer to the DfE website at www.education.gov.uk and search 'Academy.' There are several pages of very helpful information. Responses to frequently asked questions can be found at: <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/academies/academiesfaq>