



FAIRLANDS PRIMARY SCHOOL & NURSERY

Pound Avenue
Stevenage
Hertfordshire
SG1 3JA

27th June 2016

Dear Parents and Carers

In March 2016, the Department for Education released the document 'Education Excellence Everywhere'. In this document, it gave a clear directive for all schools to become an 'Academy' in the future. This is a big change in education and requires serious consideration.

At Fairlands, we are extremely proud of everything we have achieved as a school over the last decade, including the recognition we had at our last Ofsted inspection where we were judged 'good' in all areas. The Governing Body and the leadership team are, therefore, very keen to build on these successes as we seek to implement change, rather than threatening or dismantling any of the leadership, provision or systems which work so well in our school. They want to act proactively so that we can 'take control of our own destiny' as we plan ahead for the future. They are also keen for Fairlands to continue to be well-connected in the local community and to work with other local schools to ensure that our children and staff have the best opportunities available to them. Most importantly, the Governing Body wants to ensure that children and staff are protected from unwanted changes, including being forced to join an existing large academy chain, which could fundamentally change the day-to-day running of our school.

The Governing Body have been exploring different structures for Fairlands for a number of months and have set up a working party to undertake research and assess the options available. As a result of these discussions, **the governors have decided that we should consult formally on whether Fairlands Primary School should set up a multi-academy trust with another local primary school, with whom we have had a partnership with for many years: Camps Hills Primary School.** As a school we already work with many of the local schools in Stevenage, but we have specifically chosen to enter into this arrangement with Camps Hill as they have a very similar inclusive ethos to us. We are very excited at the proposal to formalise this partnership and can see many benefits that will build on successful, shared projects in the past.

The Governing Body have proposed a model to the Department for Education which ensures that the current leadership of each school has a strong representation on the Board of Directors, so that we are able to make the decisions that affect the day-to-day running of our schools. As a result, the Headteacher and the Chair of Governors will both sit on the Board of Directors of the new Multi Academy Trust. Not all Academies are able to influence decision making at this level and this is important to retain the unique character and ethos which we have within our individual schools.

What will be different?

If the school converts to an academy within the proposed Multi-Academy Trust, the school name, uniform, curriculum and communication systems will all stay the same as they are now in both schools. When we convert, the Headteacher of Fairlands will not change, and our staffing will stay the same. The existing Governing Bodies will remain and there is commitment to ensure that parents and carers will always be represented as Governors.

The differences will be;

- There will be a new organisational structure which sits above the current local governing bodies of both schools, responsible for overseeing standards across the whole 'Trust'.
- We will be able to give opportunities to staff for professional development in order to retain them in a national teacher recruitment crisis (there is a shortage of approx. 150,000 teachers across the UK).
- We will be able to share good practice and learn from each other. By working collaboratively we can improve provision, outcomes and results still further.
- Resources can be sourced as a 'Trust' to seek out best value in a climate where our school budgets are being reduced significantly.
- Children will be able to access new resources, fun learning opportunities and interventions at both schools.
- We can protect the identity of our school and make decisions about our future.

The Governors are confident that by taking control of this Government agenda we can secure the best outcome for our school and **have voted unanimously to consult on this proposal to convert to academy status**. The school has been aware of this agenda and has been discussing our options for many years. Since September 2015, we have been liaising frequently with legal teams, other local schools and the local authority to ensure that we are making an informed choice. Our staff have been made aware of the plans and agree with the next stage in our journey. We would like to reassure you that this decision has not been made lightly or in haste.

If you have any questions, **please do attend our Parent Forum on Friday 15th July at 9am** where this will be the only item of business. The consultation document is now on our website and paper copies are available for collection from the school office.

Yours Sincerely

Robert Staples
Headteacher

Hayley Yendell
Chair of Governors

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