

SPECIALIST ENGINEERING STATUS

Our Ref: DH.SS

2nd March 2009

Dear Colleague

Consultation on Draft Proposal to Change Status to 'Foundation' School

As a partner working closely with the school we would value your views on our proposal to change the status of the school. If this proposal were to go ahead you would have the opportunity to suggest a candidate to act as a partnership Governor for any future vacancies.

What is a Foundation School?

The main characteristics of a Foundation school may be summarised as follows:

- The Governing Body owns the assets
- The school becomes its own admissions authority
- The Governing Body employs all staff
- The school gains charitable status
- The make up of the Governing Body is more flexible
- A new relationship with the Local Authority begins

What are the benefits?

Characteristic	Potential Benefits
Assets ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More influence over future building maintenance and improvements • Assets are owned by the Governing Body who must agree to any future changes
Admissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to determine its own admission policy • Faster response to dealing with appeals for places
Governing Body as Employer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to improve employment benefits and working conditions for all staff • Improved local responses to any employment issues
Charitable Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved ability to raise funds for the benefit of the school
Governing Body membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased flexibility to include more local representation on the Governing Body.
Local Authority Relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining stability within the school in a time of rapid change and uncertainty during the creation of a new Local Authority. • The relationship with the Local Authority becomes more one of equal partnership
Other benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sharper and more focused decision making process. • There is an 'energising' effect on the school community • Increased ability of the Governing Body to determine the future of the school

What are the disadvantages?

The extensive research carried out indicates that there are very few disadvantages to making this change. Foundation Schools enjoy all the benefits of Community Schools but have the additional freedoms shown in the table above. The potential disadvantage is that exercising these freedoms can create additional workload for the school staff.

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Why are we considering this change?

The Governing Body at Congleton High School has always been keen to make sure that the School not only sustains and improves its standards but is also ready to develop further as an organisation. If the school were to change its status it would better allow us to fulfil our motto "Achieving Success Together" and our existing mission statement.

The Government is keen to encourage more successful schools to apply for Foundation Status since it increases the autonomy of the school.

The Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) means that there will be a new Local Authority from April 2009 which will be developing its own policies and structures. This has led the school to look at the possible advantages of changing status. The Local Authority is committed to having a wide range of schools and has no objections to Foundation Schools.

The Governing Body proposes to change their composition by introducing a new category of Partnership Governors. It proposes to appoint two Partnership Governors and reduce the number of Local Authority Governors from 4 to 2, thus keeping the total number the same.

How would this change the day to day running of the school?

Some may think that a change from Community to Foundation status would signal a decrease in community involvement. This is not the case since the proposed changes within the Governing Body would lead to greater local representation and a stronger commitment to the locality. Community activities would remain a strong focus and the community activities may well increase as a result of this change.

To the casual observer very little would change in the day to day running of the school. However, over time, it would be hoped that our increased ability to operate in partnership with others will see improvements to the educational provision, environment and resources for the school. There are no significant disadvantages attached to becoming a Foundation School.

What is the consultation process?

Parents, carers and stakeholders are invited to a meeting in the school hall at **6.00pm on Monday 16th March 2009** to discuss this proposal. If you are unable to attend the meeting you can submit your views in writing either by letter addressed to me or by email at head@congleton.cheshire.sch.uk by the end of the day on Monday 30th March 2009. You can access all documents relating to the consultation process including a more detailed explanation and answers to further questions at the school website – www.congleton.cheshire.sch.uk

Yours sincerely



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