

1ST CONSULTATION ON TRUST SCHOOL STATUS

We would like to thank everyone who responded to the 1st Consultation on the proposals for joint GCUS/ SUS Trust Status. It is not possible to reply to everyone individually but we hope that the following questions and answers will address most concerns and queries.

Will support staff terms and conditions be maintained at the national guidelines?

We would continue to use the Suffolk conditions and rates of pay.

Before achieving Trust status we would negotiate an agreement which would enable support staff to remain within the current Suffolk Pension Scheme. We would not take on Trust Status unless support staff pensions were guaranteed. The Trust would adopt the National Agreement for support staff.

What are the negatives of Trust Status?

Inevitably, more management time would have to be invested in working with our Partners and ensuring that we meet our obligations as employers although some functions would be left with the Local Authority. One of the reasons the Governors decided to proceed to consultation on Trust Status was that they could not see any substantial reasons not to. However the Governing Body retains the right to dissolve the Trust in future if the need arises.

How will you guarantee a smooth transition to Trust Status to maintain the students' quality of education?

The transition to Trust Status would affect only the management of the schools and would not impact on either teaching or learning.

Have other schools attempted this and with what results?

Church Aided Schools are Foundation Schools and have existed since 1945.

As yet, there are no Trust Schools in Suffolk but others are planned. We have visited Garforth Community College in Leeds and Kingsbridge Community College in Devon, both of which are Trust Schools. They have found that working with outside partners has helped to revitalise the management of the schools and is creating new opportunities and experiences for students. It has also opened new sources of funding.

What would be the benefits of Trust Status?

(Please refer to the Consultation document under 'Our Vision and Values' point 2.)

Trust Status would provide a firmer foundation for the partnership between the two schools. The partnership is already producing increased opportunities at pre and post 16 and it is in the interest of all students that this arrangement should be formalised.

Work with our partners and their involvement in the strategic development of our schools would raise aspiration by providing new challenges and opportunities for students as well as improving access to professional development for staff.

As a Charitable Foundation School we would have access to new sources of funding e.g. the Lottery. There are also likely to be other benefits in the future that we cannot foresee.

Could these benefits be achieved without Trust Status?

They could, but we feel that the framework of a Trust gives more permanence and solidity to our links as well as more impetus to their development.

What is the educational relevance of working with business organisations and charities?

Our aim is to prepare students to take an active part in local, national, and international communities. Links with business organisations would enhance their Work Related Learning and may provide advice and career opportunities. Through charity work students would learn to take responsibility for others, for the environment and for themselves.

How will Trust Status contribute to improved academic performance?

This would not happen overnight but links with our partner school, West Suffolk College and University Campus Suffolk would extend the choice of courses and the opportunities for personalised learning. The aim would be to raise students' aspirations through our relationship with high quality partners. There might be opportunities to use mentors, to enhance the curriculum or to make use of specific expertise. Improved performance would come about as a result of improved staff development and there are plenty of examples of other trusts working in this way.

Will staff have to sign new contracts as they will be employed by the Governing Body?

Staff would receive a letter stating that their contract had been transferred from the Local Authority to the Governing Body. The contract would be unmodified in all other respects.

Could the Trust dispose of school land?

Yes- but the Trust would need the agreement of the Governing Body and it must then inform the Local Authority of its plans. The Local Authority can object to proposals if it is felt that they are not in the interests of the school or would disadvantage the wider community. Where local agreement cannot be reached, the matter would be referred to the Schools Adjudicator for resolution.

Is the Local Authority supportive of the schools' plans?

Yes. We have already held some discussions with the LA which have been supportive and helpful. The school would remain part of the family of local authority maintained schools. It would be funded on the same basis as other schools and the LA would be able to intervene if the school was underperforming.

Is this the right time to acquire Trust Status in view of the current economic climate as well as probable changes resulting from the School Organisation Review?

The school has been awarded a grant of £10,000 which should be more than adequate to cover the costs of setting up the Trust.

The acquisition of Trust Status would not be affected by the School Organisation Review as both schools are making joint plans, together with the other schools in the cluster.

How do you plan to incorporate the Primary schools in your vision to develop the educational experience of students from 4 to 19?

We would like to develop an all-through schools experience by means of close liaison between Secondaries and Primaries and between Primaries. Each school would maintain its individual ethos and governing body but together they would develop more uniform and systematic approaches to issues such as attendance, behaviour, health and staff development. Learning networks could be set up or maintained to allow the sharing of best practice within and between pyramids.

The primaries may wish to join the Trust as full or associate members but that is entirely the decision of each individual governing body.

Governance: Why may parents elect only one third of governors? Could parents have less influence in the future? Will Trustees dominate the Governing Body?

The Government lays down the criteria for the composition of all governing bodies and stipulates that a third of the members should be Parent-Governors. Parental influence will remain the same unless the Government decides otherwise.

Governing Bodies may choose to include a majority or minority of Trustees. We have chosen the latter option therefore Trustees would not dominate the Governing Body.

Will the Trust or the federated schools appoint staff?

The Trust can employ its own staff but school staff would be appointed by the individual schools.

Will there be one Headteacher for the Trust?

No. Each Governing Body would control its own headship.

Prepared by Mrs A Pizzey – Chair of Governors, Sudbury Upper School and Arts College – 03/02/09