

Dear Member of Staff

### **MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST CONSULTATION FOR STAFF**

I am writing this to share details of our proposal to convert Baginton Fields School to academy status and to join The Thrive Education Partnership. This represents an exciting opportunity to realise our ambition to provide high quality education and care to as many students as possible.

For many years myself and the Governors of Baginton Fields have considered joining a Multi Academy Trust (MAT). We see real benefit for our students and staff by being part of a group of schools who share a similar ethos and values to ourselves. Earlier this year we were fortunate to meet with Thrive Education Partnership and over time, have forged a collaborative partnership. Based on this partnership our Governing Board has taken great care to explore all reasonable options to ensure that the students of Baginton Fields are placed in the strongest position for the future. We believe the best way of further improving standards in the future while maintaining our school's ethos, philosophy and community is by becoming an Academy and joining Thrive Education Partnership.

In June of this year our Governors signed a resolution to academise, our application was approved last week by the DFE so now we are able to begin the consultation process with all stakeholders. The due diligence process began when we started collaborating with Thrive Education Partnership and will now be supported by the Trust and the DFE. We are hoping we will formally become a member of the Thrive Education Partnership 1<sup>st</sup> March 2024.

You can use the link below to view the Partnership website

<https://www.thrive.ac/>

### **YOU ARE INVITED TO A CONSULTATION MEETING TUESDAY 7<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER AT 3.30 PM.**

Below is information that is posted on the website.

#### **Frequently asked questions**

##### **Will Baginton Fields School definitely become an academy?**

The governing body has submitted an application to convert to academy status and is working towards a conversion in March 2024. However, the school is not obligated to become an academy until the contract between the multi academy trust and the Department for Education (known as the Funding Agreement) is signed.

The academy trust will not sign the Funding Agreement until parents and carers of pupils at the school [and in years 5 and 6 of our feeder primary schools,] staff at the school, and pupils themselves have had the opportunity to comment on the proposals. We have written to all parents and carers and have invited them to a meeting on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> October at 6.00pm to learn more about the proposals to become an academy, or to comment on the proposals. A meeting with staff is being held Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> November and we will be keeping pupils informed throughout the process.

Any comments or representations which are made about the proposals will be considered by the governing body before it takes the final decision to convert to academy status. Details of how to provide comments and representations are set out below.

The governing body will not vote to proceed with academy conversion unless they are content that conversion would be in the best interests of the school, taking account of all of the legal and practical ramifications.

### **What is an academy?**

An academy is essentially an independent school which is funded by the state. It is independent of the local authority and receives its funding direct from central government.

We are proposing to become an academy as part of Thrive Education Partnership. This means that we will be part of an academy group comprising of Calthorpe Academy, Corley Academy, Kingsbury Academy, The Warwickshire Academy and Mary Elliot Academy.

### **What are the benefits of being an academy?**

In the school's opinion the benefits are numerous:

- academies are independent of local authority control – this means that academies have more freedom about how they conduct themselves
- academies receive their funding direct from central government – this means that academies receive more funding because none is retained by the local authority for the provision of central services
- academies have more freedom over the curriculum taught – this means that academies do not need to teach parts of the National Curriculum which they do not consider appropriate for their pupils
- The trust recognise a holistic approach to education is crucial, acknowledging the importance of developing communication, independence and life skills as being essential in preparing our students for adulthood and being active citizens in their local communities.
- academies can set their own pay and conditions of service for their staff – academies have the freedom to alter the pay and conditions of their staff (subject to normal employment law protections for staff) and so can provide staff with better pay and conditions than previously
- academies have more freedom to undertake innovative projects – academies are companies and so have more freedom to undertake innovative projects, such as setting up and utilising trading subsidiaries.
- the trust specialise in working with special schools with student voice and securing the best outcomes for student future destinations being at the heart of their practice and central to decision making.
- the trust appreciate, understand and value the diverse needs and uniqueness our of students.

### **Are there any disadvantages to becoming an academy?**

Thrive Education Partnership will be directly liable for matters such as insurance, employment liabilities, pensions, health and safety, and, property maintenance. However, as mentioned above, academies receive more funding from central government to help them meet these additional costs, and in any event, the Thrive Education Partnership already deals with these matters for the academies named above.

Once the school has converted, there is currently no route to revert back to being a maintained school under local authority control – academy conversion is a permanent change.

If the school was underperforming in the future, the Secretary of State may have the power to force the school (as an academy) to transfer to a different academy trust. However, in those circumstances, it is likely that the Secretary of State would have the power to intervene even if the school remained a local authority maintained school.

### **Will the admissions arrangements change?**

As a Local Authority maintained school Baginton Fields School's admissions arrangements are set by the local authority, and the local authority also decides which pupils should be offered places at the school. As an academy, Thrive Education Partnership will put in place admission arrangements, and decide which pupils should be offered places in accordance with those arrangements. The academy will still be bound by the national School Admissions Code, and School Admission Appeals Code.

The current admission arrangements will remain in place for the time being. If the academy wanted to change its admission arrangements consultation would be required.

### Will staff leave?

If the school converts to an academy, all staff currently employed by the Baginton Fields School and Coventry City Council automatically transfer to the new academy on their current pay and conditions. Although the academy will have more freedom to amend those pay and conditions in the future, the governing body does not intend to take such a step in the foreseeable future and in any event, any change to pay and conditions would need to be consulted upon with staff representatives.

### Will Baginton Fields School change?

We do not intend to change Baginton Fields School except in ways which we think will improve the school even more. For students, it is unlikely that they will see much, if any, change in their day to day school lives.

Academies do have the power to vary their curriculums and vary the length of the school day, however, it is not intended to take any such steps at this stage and would engage with parents/carers, staff and students if we did ever intend to make such changes in the future.

### How can I find out more?

A meeting will be held at the school on 25<sup>th</sup> October at 6.00 pm. We would encourage you to attend if you have any questions, or simply want to learn more.

There is also more information about academies on the DfE website:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/academies>

If you can't find the answer to your question here, or on the DfE website, and cannot attend the meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> October, please email the Headteacher who will try to assist.

alisonf@bagintonfields.coventry.sch.uk

### How can I make representations?

To respond to this consultation on whether the conversion of the school to academy status should take place: Representations can be made in writing to:

Alison Francis  
Baginton Fields School  
Sedgemoor Road  
Coventry  
CV3 4EA

Or by email to:

alisonf@bagintontfields.coventry.sch.uk

**The closing date for representations to be made is Monday 20<sup>th</sup> November.**

*"Dedicated to delivering inspirational learning experiences."*

Headteacher: Alison Francis

Deputy Headteacher: Franck Lavie

