

17 June 2011

Dear Parents & Carers

Heath Park's Relationship with Moseley Park School

I am writing to all parents to clarify the position of Heath Park in relation to Moseley Park School. The local press has carried some articles related to Moseley Park in which reference to our school has been made. However, in the absence of information, misinformation has filled the void. For this I apologise but there is as yet no formal ratification of proposals pertaining to any new relationship between the two schools.

In October 2010 Moseley Park was placed in special measures. Early in the new year, the Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, wrote to the school and the LA saying that he was minded to stand down their governing body and replace it with an Interim Executive Board (IEB) to oversee a structural solution to the issues facing the school. The IEB met for the first time on Friday, 10 June 2011. They have proposed that Heath Park sponsors Moseley Park's conversion to an academy and that the two schools form a Learning Partnership; a formal federation, through which Heath Park will support Moseley Park's school improvement action plan.

The proposal is aimed at addressing the short term needs of Moseley Park, through a long term solution, embracing a collaborative approach to continuous school improvement. The role of Heath Park as an Academy Sponsor for Moseley Park has been at the request of the LA and has the support of the Secretary of State.

The immediate developments regarding Moseley Park impact solely on staff - teaching and associate - and do not and will not result in any teacher being removed from their contact with timetabled classes at Heath Park. Curriculum developments are not on the agenda but collaboration with partner schools is commonplace Post 16 across the city and in future this will enhance provision at Key Stage 4, irrespective of our relationship with Moseley Park.

Further details regarding our relationship with Moseley Park School are available on the Heath Park website.

Academy Status

At the full Governors meeting on Tuesday 14 June, Governors unanimously supported Heath Park's application to the Secretary of State for Academy status. The following seeks to give you more background information about the process of conversion and why the Governors currently believe that it is in the best interest of our school to pursue this way forward.

A key feature of the process is consultation with parents providing an opportunity to comment on the proposals, ask questions and express your views and opinions. **The first stage of consultation with parents will end on 30 June 2011 and Governors will then consider all the consultation responses.** Additional details will be available on our website.

We will also consult all our staff, our students and other members of our community including all our local primary schools. The Governors will also need to seek legal advice to fully understand

the extent of additional responsibilities which may accompany this change and to ensure that there are no hidden surprises in the agreement which is signed with the Government when a school converts to Academy Status. This agreement is called the Funding Agreement and is in effect a contract between the Government and the Academy. The Department for Education in London provides a grant of £25,000 for this process. Feedback from a number of schools who have now completed the conversion process is that this more than meets the legal costs incurred.

Please note that a school does not become an Academy until the Funding Agreement is signed. Only when the Governors have considered the outcome of consultation and have fully scrutinized the draft Funding Agreement (having answered any legal and contractual concerns) will they vote to either adopt or reject this move.

The governors have considered the move in great detail because we wish to maintain and strengthen the character and ethos of our school and our collaborative working. We believe it is in the best interests of the whole school community and it will help to improve what the school can offer both locally and nationally.

The school would adopt a set of agreed principles, ensuring we continue to operate in partnership across the city. There are no plans to reorganise the school, change our uniform or our recruitment policy for teachers and other staff; nor are there any plans to change the way we recruit students. Our only consideration at this stage is the school name – possibly reverting back to **Heath Park High School**.

What is a “new” Academy?

Academy schools (Academies) were first established under the Academies Act 2010. They are publically funded, state schools. They operate outside Local Authority control, being directly funded by central Government. Academies enjoy a significant increase in operational autonomy which they must use to help innovate and raise standards and enhance the opportunities available to all students. In November 2010 the Government invited all schools rated by Ofsted as “Outstanding” or “Good with outstanding features”, to consider conversion to Academy Status.

As an outstanding school we had the option to convert but chose not to take it at that particular time. However, as detailed previously, the request from the Local Authority has changed the circumstances.

Issues to Consider

Finance

The new Academy Status brings with it greater autonomy and freedom to respond to the development priorities in our own school. Funding comes directly to the school.

By working with other schools we also believe that the Academies would be able to secure best value in the procurement of a wide range of supplies and services. We are already committed to working in partnership with other schools and this would continue, be strengthened and develop further.

Staffing

As an Academy, all staff would transfer with no change in their current terms of employment. The staff transfers include transfer of all current pension arrangements. Governors believe that the key to success is the recruitment and retention of the very best staff and we would do nothing to jeopardise this.

Curriculum

We have worked hard to develop our curriculum based on the principle of extending the opportunities available to our pupils and ensuring that we teach courses which maximise

achievement and progression. We are equally proud of our national reputation for excellence in the progress made by all students and through our specialisms. As an Academy we would remain true to this principle. Academies enjoy greater freedom beyond the requirements of providing a broad and balanced curriculum and we believe that this would help protect our current ethos and enhance, rather than threaten, our curriculum provision.

Admissions

As an Academy the Governors would be responsible for setting our own admissions criteria, but these would follow the national admissions code and comply with Wolverhampton co-ordinated admission arrangements. We would sign up to the Wolverhampton strategy for inclusion:

- The welcoming of children with SEN and new arrivals into the community
- A commitment to avoiding the exclusion of students
- Agreement to collaborate with all other schools so as to offer inclusive pathways to all Wolverhampton students
- Full engagement with the Secondary Social Inclusion Advisory Placement Panel

Our admissions criteria would not be changed as a result of becoming an Academy and our comprehensive status, with no admission by selection, would be protected.

Constitution and Governance

We would replicate the present composition of the Governing Body, including Local Authority representation and we would still have a large group of elected parent governors. Governors would continue to be responsible for the strategic planning and direction of the school. They are committed to retaining our inclusive ethos and character as a community school.

Name, Uniform, School Day & Holiday Pattern

As a school converts to Academy Status it is possible for Governors to propose a change to the name of the school. We would welcome parents' and carers' views on the question of changing to **Heath Park High School** as this makes it clear to our community that we are committed to retaining the character and ethos of our school. There are also no plans to change the school uniform, the length of the school day or to adopt a holiday pattern that is different to that of the rest of our local schools.

Conclusion

At this stage in the process we believe that this opportunity has the potential to help the school deliver a higher standard of education for all of our pupils and enables us to protect the existing nature and ethos of the school. Please be assured the Governors will only take a final decision when they are in possession of all the facts and have considered the responses which everyone makes during the consultation period.

Next Steps

The first stage of consultation is now open and ends on **1 July 2011**. Following this there will be opportunities for parents to ask questions and learn more about the proposals, through meetings and discussions – dates will be published on the school website. The Governors are keen to ensure that all parents fully understand and appreciate the nature of this change and why the Governors feel it to be in the best interest of the school community. If you have any questions that you would like answered or simply wish to express an opinion please refer to school website for further guidance.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Holloway
Headteacher

Mr Selkirk
Executive Headteacher