

Feltham Hill Junior School

Public Consultation

'Becoming an Academy – as part of the Aspirations Academy Trust'

The Governors of Feltham Hill Junior School have passed a resolution to begin formal a consultation about the possibility of becoming an academy sponsored by Aspirations Academies Trust. A registration of interest has been submitted to the secretary of State for Education in accordance with the decision of the Governing body. The Governors would like to consult with you about the proposal for the school to open as an Aspirations Academy in April 2014.

The Governing Body believe that joining the Aspirations Academy Trust will provide Feltham Hill Junior School with the opportunity to become part of an organisation with the resources and commitment to make certain that its pupils achieve their fullest academic potential and become responsible citizens.

Feltham Hill Junior School would become Oak Hill Academy, West London. Feltham Hill would continue to serve the local community by offering an inclusive co-educational learning environment for children from the local community, accepting students regardless of faith or ability.

Your views are important to us and we welcome your comments. Please contact us using the details provided in this booklet. The consultation regarding the proposed Aspirations Academy is being carried out by the Governing Body of Feltham Hill Junior School, supported by the Aspirations Academies Trust. It aims to help you understand the proposal for the new Academy and the AAT vision, as well as give the opportunity for you to express your views on it. The Academy consultation commenced on 22nd November and will last for four weeks ending on 20th December 2013.

What is an Academy?

Academies are all-ability schools serving local communities. The Department for Education meets the running costs for an Academy in full, as a part of an overall strategy to continue to raise standards. Academies receive equivalent funding to other similar schools in the same area. Academies continue to be subject to regular inspections by Ofsted.

Academies are publicly funded, **Independent Schools** which have:

- **Freedom from local authority control;** allowing Feltham Hill Junior greater autonomy to determine what is best for the school and the community it serves and removing some of the local authority bureaucracy. Where appropriate, Feltham Hill Junior School will continue to work in partnership with the LA as part of the 'extended family of schools'.
- **Freedom from the National Curriculum;** allowing the school & its teachers to ensure we provide a broad & balanced curriculum which works in the best interests of all pupils at Feltham Hill and which maximises our pupils' success and future prospects.
- **A commitment to work on school improvement with other schools.** This extends & deepens the partnership work that Feltham Hill already engages in with the West Partnership of Schools and other schools in the area. Academy status also provides greater opportunities for collaboration in general.
- **Greater autonomy over how the money provided for the school is spent,** including the portion that is currently retained centrally by the local authority. Academy status will provide greater financial security for the school in a very challenging financial climate. Academies are also able to access some government grants not available through the local authority. Funding will be matched to the academic year instead of the financial year. An academy will also have its own bank account giving it more responsiveness.

- **Other potential choices** such as being able to consult on changes of school terms and the length of the school day (subject to being consistent with staff's terms and conditions of employment) and make bids for capital funding for buildings directly to the Department for Education.

OTHER KEY POINTS

- **The Trust will hold the land and assets** and manages these directly for the benefit of pupils and the local community. The land and assets are safe from the risk of sale or other use by the local authority, something that has not always been guaranteed in the past!
- **The Trust will become the employer of all the staff** at Feltham Hill in a smooth and well managed transition without detriment and with benefits for staff such as improved payroll management. In moving to academy status, all Feltham Hill employed staff will again be protected by TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings & Protection of Employment) arrangements and be transferred on their same pay and conditions (including pensions) without detriment. Staff transfer to the new Academy on their existing terms and conditions. This covers staff on permanent and fixed term contracts. The AAT aim to ensure as smooth a transition as possible. We expect that academy status will make the school even more attractive to potential recruits and existing staff and foster stability. It is in the interests of the school to ensure this is the case.
- **The school will become its own admissions authority but it is the policy of the Aspirations Academies Trust to** always offer inclusive education designed for the needs of the local community. The Aspirations Academy will serve local children and will have an inclusive admissions policy, accepting pupils regardless of faith or ability.
- **Financial Management:** Feltham Hill Junior School welcomes the new financial systems that accompany academy status; the accounts are completely different from the bureaucracy of CFR (Consistent Financial Reporting) returns but follow companies law requirements so are very robust and regulated by a funding agreement which is a formal agreement made between the Secretary of State and the Academy Trust. Academies will be treated in the same way as LA schools and will be able to reclaim VAT in the same way as the LA does for schools.
- **Best Value:** Feltham Hill Junior School has experience of procuring services from the Local Authority and from commercial companies. In many cases, the school (and its partner schools through joint procurement) has obtained services bespoke to the school's needs, better service levels and better value for money. Greater financial autonomy will increase opportunities to compare what the Local Authority offers with other providers of similar services. We can then choose whichever provider offers the service which best matches our needs. The traditional view that local authorities have been able to negotiate better deals has been proven not to be accurate in many cases and schools are obliged to consider best value in the buying of goods and services. Savings achieved by better purchasing mean that more of the public money is provided to support the education of pupils. This is extremely important in a time of austerity in public finances.
- **Governance:** The Aspirations Academies Trust has overall responsibility for the Aspirations Academies. However, each Academy has its own Academy Local Advisory Board of Governors and would be part of an AAT **West London** District Governing Body, managing the education of all the AAT Academies, aged 3-18, in the local area. Both the AAT **West London** District Governing Body and the '**Oak Hill Academy West London**' Local Advisory Board will be made up of representatives from the AAT, parents/carers and staff, alongside other representatives from the local community or local businesses appointed for their skills, abilities and local knowledge. This is very similar to how the school governing body is currently made up. As an Academy the AAT expects most of the existing governors to continue to serve the new Academy.
- The costs of becoming an academy are met by a government grant of £25,000.

Would the uniform change?

- Dependent on confirmation of funding from the Department of Education, there may be an opportunity to change the uniform. Initially, pupils would receive a selection of items at no cost to parents/carers. We have not yet

decided what the uniform would be, and any uniform change will be done with the least disruption for parents/carers as possible.

The Governing Body believe that the likely disadvantages are few and not weighty compared with the likely advantages, for example:

1. There is in the short term an increased management & administration workload involved in becoming academy but the 'one off' grant allows the school to buy additional resource to support the process and the AAT will support the school with this process. The local authority currently generates significant unnecessary and additional work which the school will be relieved of and so this is seen as a wise investment by the school.
2. Other schools may be disadvantaged by the effects of some schools becoming academies. On the one hand, this would also be true for Feltham Hill Junior School if it does not become an academy but more importantly our pupils and staff would lose out on all the advantages of being an academy if we were not to do so. This is a time of unprecedented change in the landscape of education in Hounslow. Ten of the thirteen secondary schools in Hounslow are now academies or in the process of becoming academies, a number of Primaries have already begun public consultation to convert to academy, Free schools are opening up locally, some schools are looking to become sponsored academies some voluntary others will have no choice in the matter. In addition there is expansion of primary provision due to the age profile of the area. The school believes that by becoming an Academy as part of the Aspirations Academies Trust it will be in the best position to protect its core values and seek further school improvements.

The Aspirations Academies Trust is a Multi-Academy Educational Trust with a growing number of primary and secondary Academies. The Aspirations Academies Trust (AAT) considers that its beliefs and principles are applicable and effective with students from age 3 to 18. Each stage of a child's education is extremely important - pre-school, primary and secondary - and should, where possible be coherent across the phases of education in the practice of developing the principles and conditions central to the beliefs and aims of the AAT. For this reason, the AAT supports primary, secondary and, where possible, all through (Ages 3-18) academies.

Dialogue with Stakeholders

The Governing Body wants everyone to understand the benefits of becoming an academy and why it believes this change is timely and essential to the school, its staff, its pupils and the community. The Governing Body believe that joining the Aspirations Academy Trust will provide Feltham Hill Junior School with the opportunity to become part of an organisation with the resources and commitment to make certain that its pupils achieve their fullest academic potential and become responsible citizens. Feltham Hill would continue to serve the local community by offering an inclusive co-educational learning environment for children from the local community, accepting students regardless of faith or ability.

The Governing Body decided that the school should consult widely with stakeholders so that all in our community are well informed and all have the opportunity to participate. It has asked the Headteacher, Mrs Lancy, to manage the consultation on its behalf.

The consultation is open to everyone and specifically includes staff, parents/carers, students, local schools, local businesses, community users & groups, the local authority and professional associations. The consultation will provide opportunities for the school to explain the decision and respond to any queries from stakeholders.

Key Consultation Milestones

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|---------------------------------------|---|
| 22nd November 2013: | Consultation began. Notification of stakeholders began & initial responses arrive |
| 3rd December 2013: | 12.45pm: Staff meeting |
| 10th December 2013: | 6.00 pm: Public meeting for parents & other stakeholders at Feltham Hill Junior School |

The Governing Body has committed to consider all contributions to the consultation and seek contributions from everyone in favour or against and anyone who simply has questions they wish to ask.

It is proposed that Feltham Hill Junior School would change its name to **Oak Hill Academy, West London**, we and the AAT want to protect and enhance the ethos we have developed as a successful, caring school with a strong commitment to excellence and opportunities for its pupils, staff and community.

As an academy, Feltham Hill would continue to support and promote the interests of children and their community across Hounslow and beyond. A specific requirement and responsibility of becoming an academy is partnership with other schools to raise achievement.

The consultation period is until 20th December 2013 at 12:00.

Your choice how you respond

You can take part in the consultation process by:

- Returning the proforma below, in an envelope marked '**Academy Consultation**' which can be posted to the school or given to the main school reception.
- By email to office@fhj.hounslow.sch.uk marking the subject box with the words '**Academy Consultation**'.
- By attendance at the **Public Meeting** to be held at Feltham Hill Junior School on **10th December 2013 6pm**.
- (School staff only) By attendance at the staff meeting on **3rd December 2013 at 12.45pm**.

After the consultation

Responses that are received by first post on **20th December 2013** will be considered by the Governing Body. Responses will be formally considered before the funding agreement is signed. If, following consultation, it is decided that Feltham Hill Junior School should become an Aspirations Academy, a Supplementary Funding Agreement will be submitted to the Department for Education for approval by the Secretary of State – for opening as an academy in April 2014.

A report of the consultation will be posted on the school website on Friday 10th January 2014 (www.felthamhilljunior.co.uk) after the consultation period along with the Governing Body's response to the consultation.

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Frequently Asked Questions and Responses

1. Will the Academy deliver the full Academic curriculum?

Feltham Hill Junior School will deliver a broad and balanced curriculum designed to meet the needs and aspirations of the pupils.

2. How will the Academy's governing body ensure democratic representation?

The Academy will be part of the Aspirations Academies Trust. It is both a company and an exempt charity. Being an exempt charity means that it will not need to be registered with the Charity Commission, but still subject to specific legal guidelines. Ultimately, the Academy Trust will be accountable to the pupils, parents and community and will act in

the best interests of the school. It is responsible to the Department for Education (DfE) and there will be community representation on the local governing body advisory board. There will also be parent and staff representatives who will be elected by parents and staff respectively.

3. How will the Academy involve parents?

We are open to suggestions on how best to do this. We are already aware of some best practice from our other Academies, e.g. home learning agreements; access to ICT equipment at home; extended services support to parents. Our intention is to treat pupils and parents as customers, therefore their views will be paramount on how the relationship will work.

4. What assurances will the Academy give to guarantee the terms and conditions of the teaching and support staff?

Being a good employer is one of the Sponsors' strategic aims. We intend to attract and retain good teaching and support staff. The Academy will be very strong and supportive on performance.

5. How will the Academy establish tangible links with other schools?

It is in the Academy's interest to work closely with the local and wider group of schools, Colleges and training providers, employers and community groups.

6. How will admissions be arranged? Is this based on proximity to the Academy?

The admissions policy is published on the Academy website.

7. How will the Academy project be funded?

The Academy is funded directly by the Department for Education (DfE).

8. Will the Aspirations Academies Trust be contributing any money towards the conversion?

The remit of the Sponsor is not to contribute financially to the Academy. Their purpose is to bring the educational direction and support for the school and deliver the highest standards for pupils.

9. What is an Academy?

Academies are publicly funded independent local schools that provide a first class free education. They are all ability schools established by sponsors from business, faith or voluntary groups working with partners from the local community. Academies provide a teaching and learning environment that is in line with the best in the maintained sector and offer a broad and balanced curriculum to pupils of all abilities. Further information on academies is available on the Department for Education website which can be accessed using the link below. <http://www.education.gov.uk/popularquestions/a005582/what-are-academies?>

10. What are the benefits of an Academy? Do they make a difference?

The recent Public Accounts Committee report on Academies has found that Academies have achieved rapid academic improvements and raised aspirations in some of the most challenging schools in the most deprived areas of the country.

11. Do Academies get more funding than other schools?

The Government always aims to provide an equivalent amount of funding for Academies as it does for regular state schools. The National Audit Office has said that the formula the Government uses to do this works.

12. Who approves Academy sponsors?

When a potential Academy sponsor lets the Government know that they'd like to support an Academy, they are thoroughly vetted, and their motives for wanting to become involved are scrutinised. Some Academy sponsors are charities or groups.

13. What if an Academy sponsor decides to pull out of an Academy?

When a person or organisation agrees to become an Academy sponsor, they commit to doing so for at least seven years. However, if an Academy sponsor wants to withdraw, they can give notice. If they do this, they are expected to stay in place until another Academy sponsor has been appointed by the Government. Nevertheless, the Aspirations Academies Trust intends to be involved with Feltham Hill Junior School for perpetuity.

14. What happens if the Government is not happy with the Academy sponsor?

The Government takes a keen interest in the effectiveness and direction of Academy sponsors. Where an Academy is not making satisfactory progress the Government will work closely with sponsors to secure whatever changes are necessary to accelerate progress.

15. Are Academies inspected by Ofsted?

The timing of Ofsted inspections once an Academy opens varies depending on which category the predecessor school was in. Feltham Hill Junior School may be subject to a monitoring inspection within two full terms of opening. The outcome of the monitoring inspection may influence the timing of future inspection events.

If you have further questions please email:

office@fhj.hounslow.sch.uk

please put 'Academy Consultation' in the subject box

Consultation Proforma

Name:	
Status: Parent / Staff Member / Other	<small>Please Specify</small>
Comment / Views on the proposal:	
Question(s):	