



# High Beech Church of England Primary School

Mott Street, Loughton, Essex IG10 4AP

Telephone: 020 8508 6048 Fax: 020 8532 0161

Email: [admin@highbeech.essex.sch.uk](mailto:admin@highbeech.essex.sch.uk)

Head Teacher: Mrs Sarah Roffey B.Ed (Hons)

## CONSULTATION LETTER TO PARENTS

16<sup>th</sup> Oct 2017

Dear Parents/ Carers,

High Beech School has been part of a very successful consortium of 23 local primary schools from Loughton, Epping, Chigwell and Buckhurst Hill for many years. This consortium is called **Epping Forest Consortium** and it enables schools to work collaboratively together, with school improvement being its main aim. 16 of these schools, including High Beech School are now developing this partnership further and working towards forming a Multi Academy Trust. The letter below provides you with more detailed information about this proposal.

### What are Academies?

Academies are state-funded independent schools, receiving their funding directly from the government, rather than the Local Authority. They are overseen by individual charitable bodies called academy trusts. Under the present government, the Academy programme has been expanded to embrace all schools, putting more flexibility and ownership in the hands of individual schools, giving greater freedom to innovate and tailor provision to local needs and priorities.

Whilst government timescales and approaches have altered, the direction of travel remains the same and Multi-Academy Trusts have emerged as the preferred academy model. The proposed National Funding Formula for schools will have a significant impact on the Local Authority and therefore the support options available to schools. Schools need to ensure that they future-proof themselves against the financial and structural changes ahead.

### What are the implications?

The stories in the press about the increasing pressures on school budgets are no fiction and finances are being squeezed. We anticipate that support currently provided by the local authority at Essex County Council, will also lose a significant proportion of its funding, reducing the services currently available to schools, or increase the costs of buying them.

### What next for High Beech School?

Doing nothing is no longer a sensible option and we have done a great deal of information gathering to determine the options available and the best pathway for the children of High Beech School. Other schools within the Epping Forest Consortium have also been scanning the education horizons and have made the decision to convert from a Local Authority Maintained School to become a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT), inviting other local schools to join them in forming a local learning partnership.

High Beech School has been heavily involved in the discussions that have helped shape the direction this MAT might take to maximise the opportunities for collaboration amongst local schools, which could benefit the local community and its young people.

To explore this option more, the governors have formally agreed to pursue the next steps to initiate conversion to academy status for High Beech School with a view to forming a local MAT.

### What are the advantages of joining a local MAT?

The Epping Forest Consortium already supports lots of informal collaboration amongst its member schools. A local partnership in the form of a Multi-Academy Trust would further enhance the potential for all sorts of cost savings, economies of scale and enhanced purchasing power.





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Educational and learning opportunities include improved curriculum links between the schools; opportunities for staff to work across key stages (e.g. KS1 – KS2) to enhance expectations and understanding, as well as staff development opportunities – all of which could help staff recruitment and retention, which is becoming a more significant issue due to the high cost of living locally.

## What difference will it make?

We are hoping from the outside there will be very little obvious change. The uniform, the staff and the name of our school will all be exactly the same. Behind the scenes things will work a little differently. The school will have a different bank account, we might purchase supplies and stock from different companies but day to day you probably won't see any difference. The children might notice more opportunities to use facilities at other local schools but most of the changes will happen behind the scenes to enhance provision and transition.

## What happens next?

Following a 12 month period of due diligence, the full governing body has voted to pursue the next steps to initiate conversion to academy status, with a view to forming the Epping Forest MAT with at least fifteen other schools in the Epping Forest area. We have registered this proposal with the DfE and Essex County Council for approval. Another important part of this phase is to launch a formal consultation with you, the parents, staff and other stakeholders. This is a crucial part of the process, which takes place in tandem with a host of other tasks that will be completed over the five weeks.

## What do you think?

We are keen to hear your views and your questions. To explain the process more fully and give you the opportunity to ask questions we would like to invite you to an information meeting on **Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> November at 6.30 pm** in the school hall. We will talk to you more fully about the options we have been exploring, the choices made and why, and the timeline for the conversion process.

Please don't worry if you can't be there in person. There will be some information on our school website by Friday 20<sup>th</sup> October specifically relating to the academy conversion process and we will be posting and updating FAQs from both the information evening, and also any we receive by email. Your questions will help governors shape the next steps of the process and understand more fully what is important to you.

Please come and take this opportunity to share your views and find out more.

Ultimately, it's about the children and we feel that converting to an academy and forming a MAT with other local primary schools will offer long term benefits in terms of expected standards and pupil outcomes.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Will this mean another new uniform?

No, the uniform will remain unchanged if we join a local MAT.

### Will the school name have to change?

No, we will still be called High Beech School. The name of the MAT has not yet been decided.





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## Who will be running the school?

High Beech School will still have its own leadership team and its own Head. There are no plans to change this while the budget can still sustain it. The full governing body will likely reduce in size to form a local governing body. They will all be accountable to a board of MAT trustees who will oversee all the schools in the MAT.

## When will High Beech School become an Academy?

If each stage is successful we are likely to convert during the spring of 2018. Nothing is definite until the secretary of state for education and the school signs the agreement.

## Is there a financial cost to the school?

We can apply for a £25,000 government grant to help with any costs linked to the conversion, such as legal fees. We don't anticipate any financial costs beyond that funded by the grant.

## Will the school have more money if it becomes an Academy?

The school will still have its own budget allocation from the DfE, but instead of this coming via the Local Authority, it will come via the MAT. Currently the LA keeps a percentage of this allocation. As an academy the vast proportion of the budget will be devolved to the school but a small percentage goes to the Epping Forest MAT. Specific figures will be available once we are able to get funding details from the DfE about budget shares. To get more specific financial information we need to progress to the next stage in the process.

## Will the schools in the MAT have the same holidays?

We don't envisage any changes in school holidays as we currently work closely together to ensure that we maximise the opportunity to work together during training days.

If you have any questions, please email the **Chair of Governors, Peter Walker:**

**[pwalker@highbeech.essex.sch.uk](mailto:pwalker@highbeech.essex.sch.uk)**

We can then add your questions to the FAQs and make sure we include them at the consultation meeting on **9<sup>th</sup> November at 6.30 pm**. If you would like to join us, please return the slip below to the school office.

Yours sincerely

High Beech Governing Body

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I would like to attend the **MAT information** meeting on **9<sup>th</sup> November at 6.30 pm**.

Name:.....

