

To Parents and Carers of Beaufort Community School

Consultation on the Possibility of Changing the Status of the School from a Foundation School to a Trust School

Beaufort Community School is considering forming a Trust Partnership with our local primary schools and other organisations which can support the school in delivering high quality education in our local area.

Acquiring a trust is a way for schools to raise standards through strengthening collaboration and drawing on the expertise and energy of their partners to support the school's development. The school continues to operate within the same frameworks as other maintained schools. It must teach the National Curriculum, have an admissions policy in accordance with the School Admissions Code and be inspected by Ofsted.

The school already benefits from the support and input of a range of external organisations. Trusts are a way to move beyond ad-hoc projects and to put in place long-term sustainable arrangements. In our case, a shared Trust for several schools will enable us to build on existing collaboration and to develop a shared sense of direction.

The Governing Body of a Trust school (which retains parents, staff, community and local authority governors) remains responsible for all major decisions about the school and its future.

The Trust does not try to run the school. It offers support and advice, and in some situations resources, to help the particular focus for the trust.

At their meeting on 2nd February 2010 the Governors General Purposes Committee of Beaufort Community School agreed to launch a consultation with parents, staff members and the wider community to consider the benefits of altering the status of the school to become a Trust School.

No decision to proceed with a change of status has yet been made.

This document sets out the reasons why we have considered this possibility. It also sets out a possible timetable for change and from that timetable you will see that a key meeting of the Governing Body will take place on 20th April 2010, when they will review the responses from staff, parents, pupils, the community and the Local Authority.

At that point the decision will be made to publish statutory proposals or to take no further action. If governors decide to proceed with the publication of statutory proposals, then a final decision would be made in June 2010.

This consultation document is set out below in nine sections. They are:

1. What is a Trust School?
2. Why are we thinking about this?
3. Who are the partners who would form the Trust?
4. What are the Trust's charitable objectives?
5. Future constitution of the Governing Body

6. What changes would we see?
7. A possible timetable for change.
8. Frequently asked questions.
9. How do I respond?

1. WHAT IS A TRUST SCHOOL?

The concept of a Trust School is not new. A Trust School is a foundation school which is supported by a charity, referred to as a Trust, which owns the land and buildings and appoints some of the governors.

The Trust will be a registered charity. The Trust helps both the current leadership team and governing body to further shape the ethos and the work of the school. The partners with whom we are working in developing these proposals will, we believe, bring significant benefits to our school and to the community that we serve. We anticipate this work having a positive impact on the work of other local organisations and our ability to work with them positively for the benefit of the Tuffley, Grange and Podsmead communities.

The main characteristics of Trust Schools may be summarised as follows:

- (a) The Trust owns the buildings and premises and the Governing Body exerts complete control over the use of school facilities. The Trust cannot, by law, do anything which is deemed as detrimental to the educational provision of the children.
- (b) The school will still be its own admissions authority, although it may not operate outside the national legislation framework and is subject to the local Admissions Forum.
- (c) All teaching and support staff in the school remain employees of the Governing Body and all of their statutory employment and pension rights remain the same as staff in other schools.
- (d) The school itself also gains charitable status.
- (e) The make-up of the Governing Body changes slightly, a minimum of two of the governors being appointed by the Trust.

2. WHY ARE WE THINKING ABOUT THIS AND WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE BENEFITS?

There are several reasons why Beaufort Community School is consulting on becoming a Trust School. It is important to say that we are not doing this alone. We are looking to develop an open trust so that when and if we identify others who can support the growth of Beaufort Community School, they can join. Secondly, as you know, we already work closely with Grange Primary School and Harewood Junior School and this would be a shared trust along with those schools. This means we will work together closely, yet retain our autonomy and individual character, to provide the best possible education for the pupils and families in the areas we serve.

Acquiring a trust is a way for Beaufort to raise standards through strengthening collaboration and drawing on the expertise and energy of our partners in the trust to support the school. Schools continue to face an increasing number of challenges. No longer are we just dealing with the

academic progress of pupils, but also the social aspects of the lives of our pupils and families. The clear philosophy of Beaufort Community School has always been that we wish to continue to improve. By working closely with identified partners who share our ethos we can drive change and improvement at the school. Trust status offers us the opportunity to expand on the excellent work already taking place whilst developing a clear sustainable future.

We have for many years focused very successfully on developing the skills of all staff who work in the school. If we can ensure that teachers and staff are as effective as possible then the pupils will get the best support possible. The success of this can be seen not only in all the achievements the school has had but also the number of staff who have moved onto other schools into senior posts and had a positive impact on the improvement of those organisations. By working closely with the other schools in the trust we can share our expertise and that means that teachers knowledge and skills will continue to develop and that learning opportunities for the pupils will develop too.

Consequently we have looked to develop partners who share our ethos for Beaufort and who can help us to move forward in the areas we identify as crucial for continued improvement.

3. WHICH POTENTIAL PARTNERS AND WHY?

University of Gloucester

We already have successful links with the University in terms of providing opportunities for many of their students and a number of our staff did their initial training with them. However by forming a formal trust with them we can together identify a range of further opportunities. In addition to possible staff training we are looking to develop research projects around some of the work described above. We would look to build a strong link between the Sixth Form and the University to support progression to Higher Education.

The Co-operative Society

The Co-operative Society have considerable expertise in supporting school's trusts and have a history of supporting education ever since its foundation. The Co-operative Society stands for self-help, equality, democracy and community solidarity. These are all beliefs that our schools share and we look forward to working with the Co-operative Society to engage the local community. Through this model of a Trust we will be forming a Forum for consultation with all local stakeholders including parents, staff, pupils and community organisations.

Gloucester Primary Care Trust

We already work alongside the Primary Care Trust and are looking to develop further the relationship with them to help us to ensure that pupils and their families receive the advice, support and skills they need to be able to cope with the demands of the 21st century. This is especially relevant for some of our more vulnerable families. We see this improving our work in health education for pupils and their families.

Action for Children

Action for Children is a charity which supports and speaks out for vulnerable children. It believes that all children should be able to achieve their full potential and that all children and young people have unique potential and that they should have the support and opportunities they need to reach it. It also works with young people of all ages to help them develop resilience and the skills to overcome the issues they face. We feel this expertise could be accessed to develop the skills of

staff and pupils to help them to achieve more highly as well as enabling them to have improved emotional well being.

4. THE TRUST'S CHARITABLE OBJECTS

These will be clarified and determined if and when the Trust is set up. They will though include:

- Supporting pupils' academic achievement
- The continued advancement of the personalised education of pupils at the school
- Promoting pupils' personal development
- The promotion of community cohesion

5. THE CONSTITUTION OF THE GOVERNING BODY

Beaufort Community School

The Governing Body of Beaufort Community School proposes that a minority of the Governing Body be appointed by the Trust.

6. WHAT WOULD CHANGE?

In terms of what you see day to day, very little will change at all. The school will continue to run as it does now. The intention of the Trust is, as stated, to take the opportunity to extend with whom and how we work with partners for the benefit of your children. The sustainability we are trying to develop will ensure that not only do we continue to improve in the short term but that this will be built into the work of the school for the future, no matter who is working here. We have always recognised that there are real benefits in working with other people and in maintaining a strong professional dialogue; we now want to take this further.

Parents and students would see absolutely no difference in the day to day running of the school. However the range of the interactions we can offer and consequently we hope the quality of what we offer, can continue to improve and ensure an even wider range of support for children, families and staff. Over time, it is to be hoped that working with our partners, together with our increased ability to operate in partnership with others on a business level, will see improvements to the environment and resources that we are able to offer.

However, it is important to make it clear that there is no significant financial gain in the short term. Our relationship with the Local Authority will remain the same although they have expressed very positive support for what we are doing and a desire to be informal partners in this venture.

From the point of view of the employees at the schools, there would be no change. As a charitable trust we would be able to bid for funds from sources currently not available to us as a School.

7. PROPOSED TIMETABLE FOR CHANGE

Meeting and Consultation process

We will need two consultation periods.

First public consultation on the initial proposal - this must be followed by a governing body meeting to review representations that are made and to make any necessary adjustments in drafting the statutory proposals.

Second public consultation – publication and review of statutory proposals, followed by a further governing body meeting to review representations and to make the final decision as to whether to become a Trust or not.

General Purposes Committee meeting	2 nd February 2010
First consultation period	22 nd February 2010
End of first consultation period	1 st April 2010
Governing Body meeting to consider representations	20 th April 2010
Second consultation period	17 th May 2010
End of second consultation	11 th June 2010
Target for confirmation of Trust status	30 th June 2010

8. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Relationship with the Local Authority

Our relationship with the Local Authority will remain the same. We have had a number of discussions with them regarding this matter. They have expressed very positive support for what we are doing and a desire to be informal partners in this venture.

Partnerships with other schools and agencies

Partnerships with other schools and networks will continue where we feel this is for the benefit of the school and its community. This will be as we have always done in the past. Other schools could join the Trust in the future.

Are there any costs involved in changing status?

Through our initial bid we were awarded a sum of money which we could use exclusively in pursuing our interest in becoming a Trust School. As a result there are no additional costs involved to the school.

Are just parents part of the consultation ?

No. We have sent copies of this letter to a range of agencies and organisations who may have any interest – the Local Authority, local schools, organisations in Grange, Tuffley and Podsmead, local churches etc and we would welcome their response.

9. HOW DO I RESPOND?

The Governing Body would really like to hear your views. You can voice an opinion by:

1. Respond using the Questionnaire enclosed with this document.
2. Letter to the Clerk to the Governors at Beaufort Community School
3. E-mail to office@beaufort.gloucs.sch.uk

This letter is also available in the Trust School section of our website.

Replies must be received by 9am 1st April 2010