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Whiteknights Primary School

Growing Greatness



Headteacher Mr F Walker

Academy Update - March 2017

Dear Parent/Carer,

Thank you to all those that took the time and trouble to attend one of our consultation sessions on becoming an Academy. For those that were unable to attend we have a lot of information on the website, including a presentation, frequently asked questions, the options available to Whiteknights and why the governing body believes that becoming an academy is in the best interests of the children, staff and wider Whiteknights community. Here's the link:

<http://www.whiteknights.wokingham.sch.uk/about-us/academy-news/>

If anyone has any questions, please submit them via the school office and we'll either respond directly or publish answers in the next newsletter update. In the meantime, here are some of the questions we've received so far:

1. What will change if Whiteknights becomes an academy?
2. What is a Multi-academy trust and who would Whiteknights partner with?
3. What is the process for becoming an academy and at what stage is Whiteknights currently?

What will change if Whiteknights becomes an academy?

In the short term, very little. From the pupils' perspective their teachers will be the same, they'll have the same school uniform, the school day will remain the same and we'll keep the name Whiteknights. Initial changes will be in the background. For example, the school will be funded directly from the DfE rather than via the Local Authority. This will provide Whiteknights with the flexibility to spend the money where it is most needed, rather than having to purchase local authority services that we don't want or need. As an academy we also have the flexibility to develop the curriculum, and over time we will be working with our partners to see how the curriculum can be enriched and expanded.

What is a Multi-academy trust and who would Whiteknights partner with?

A multi-academy trust (MAT) is a formal partnership of two or more schools, under a single Trust. The schools within the Trust would work closely together, using the collective skills and knowledge from both schools to raise standards and improve provision for all pupils; good examples might be PE, Music, Modern Foreign Languages, or Drama. In most Primary schools today, a classroom teacher is responsible for the majority of lessons in the majority of subjects. As the MAT develops this is an area that we would explore further, namely specialist subject teachers who move between schools so that all of the pupils can benefit from their expertise.



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Whiteknights has been researching the benefits of academisation for well over a year, and during that time we have spoken with a number of other schools about their plans and aspirations. In the majority of cases these schools have been geographically close to Whiteknights (e.g. within 30 minutes travel time) as we see proximity as a key benefit. Perhaps more importantly we have been trying to engage with schools that share our educational philosophy, have similarly high standards, and bring skills that would add value to the MAT. One school that fits these criteria is Alfred Sutton, a Reading School. The relationship began with activities between the schools, to share ideas and good practice. This relationship has now developed to the point where jointly establishing a MAT is being considered. Before any formal decision is made both schools would undertake 'due diligence' into finances, premises, safeguarding and other aspects of the school to ensure that there are no surprises.

What is the process for becoming an academy and at what stage is Whiteknights currently?

Formal applications need submitting to the DfE. These are reviewed by our nominated contact and then reviewed by a Headteacher Board for formal approval. Whiteknights has just been through this process and as a result have our Academy Order and permission to convert, subject to establishing a formal partnership with at least one other school. The next step would be to establish the multi-academy trust, but we will not begin this process until we are sure that we have found the right partner. In the meantime, we can access a grant of £25,000 to pay for the legal costs associated with conversion.

The current plan is for Whiteknights to formally become an academy in the Autumn term, perhaps October or November (this is subject to change).

We'll provide regular updates on our progress through the newsletter, but please let us know if you have questions or concerns.

Thank you for your continued support.

Mark A'Bear
Chair of Governors



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